VOICE

an opera in one act

by

Whyte & McClure

Ron Whyte, librettist
Lee McClure, composer

for

Baritone
Soprano
Piano
Double bass

Contents
–scenario
–score
–libretto

VOICE
Synopsis

The two characters in Ron Whyte's autobiographical libretto for this opera are himself and Ms. Ronnie Stier. They are both handicapped: Ron has two artificial legs and uses crutches. Ms. Stier is a quadriplegic confined to an electric wheelchair.

In an atmosphere stripped of sentimentality, the opera explores their three-year relationship of daily multi-hour phone conversations and infrequent meetings, leading up to Ms. Stier becoming a fulltime disability activist.

Ms. Stier helps Ron realize that he has played the "kept clever cripple" to ingratiate himself with important people. Ron's harsh criticisms of her TV appearances convince her to create an effective public image. Rather than seek sympathy and appear meekly grateful for any show of concern, Ron convinces her it is better to be a "super cripple" and even scare people in order to ultimately reach them as fellow human beings.

Juggling their fight against discrimination with their precarious struggle for survival, they are put in a balancing act upon which their lives depend.

Background to VOICE

In addition to being an internationally recognized playwright, Ron Whyte was involved in political activism and help draft Section #504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, the sweeping law which for the first time granted civil rights to people with disabilities

Ms. Ronnie Stier was instrumental in the fight for consumer control over personal care provided to the disabled. Being totally dependent on home care attendants, Ms. Stier led a long hard battle to secure the right of disabled people to control important daily decisions such as when to bathe, eat or call doctors.

Wheelchair accessibility of New York City buses was the result of a lawsuit that Ms. Stier helped coordinate against New York State.

Both Mr. Whyte and Ms. Stier died before reaching the age of 50.

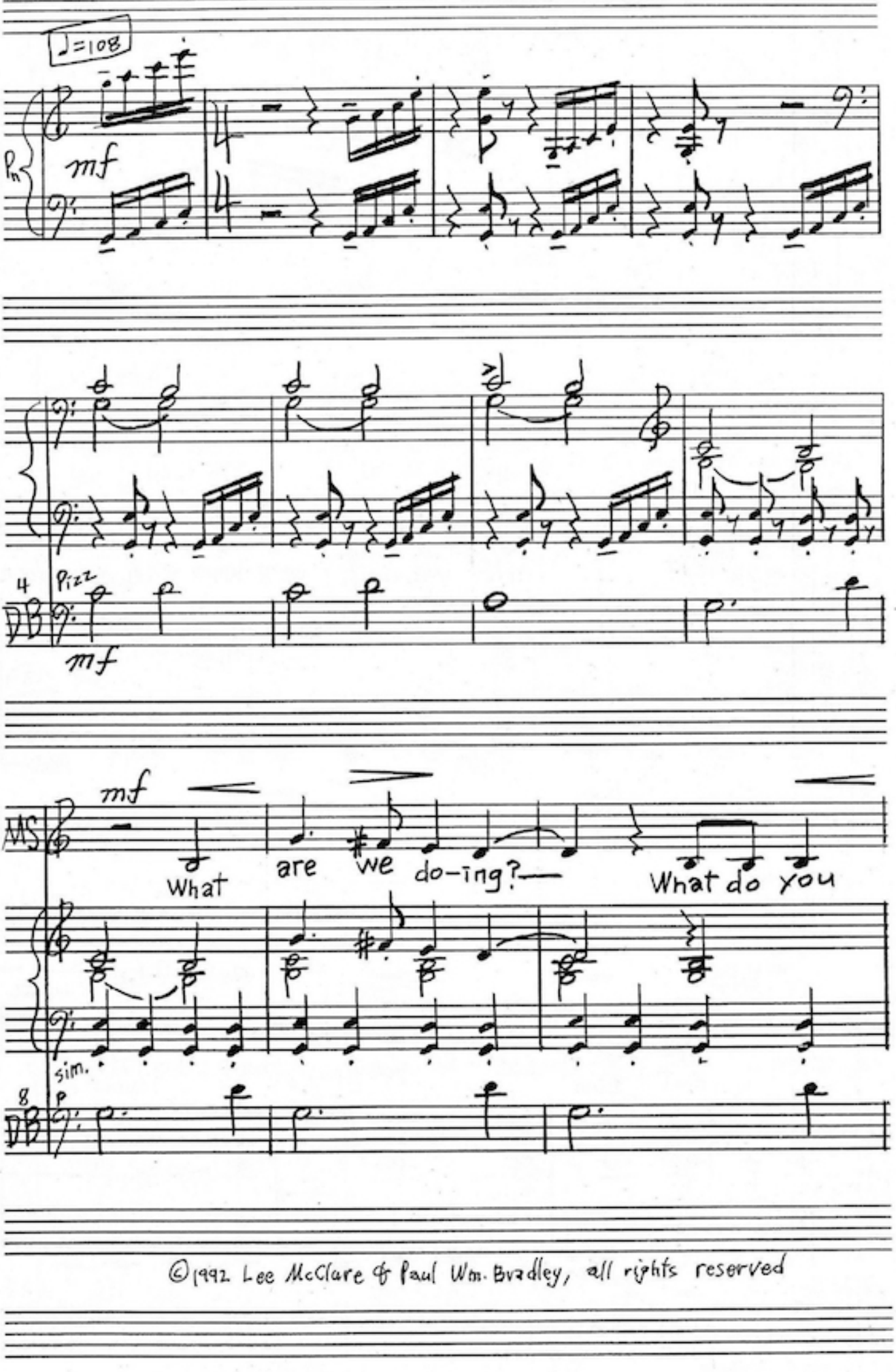
— — —

VOICE has been described as *"powerful and authentic to the feelings and experiences of people with disabilities"* by Anne Emerman former Director of the New York City Mayor's Office For People with Disabilities.

"VOICE"

Ron Whyte, Libretto

Lee McClure, Music



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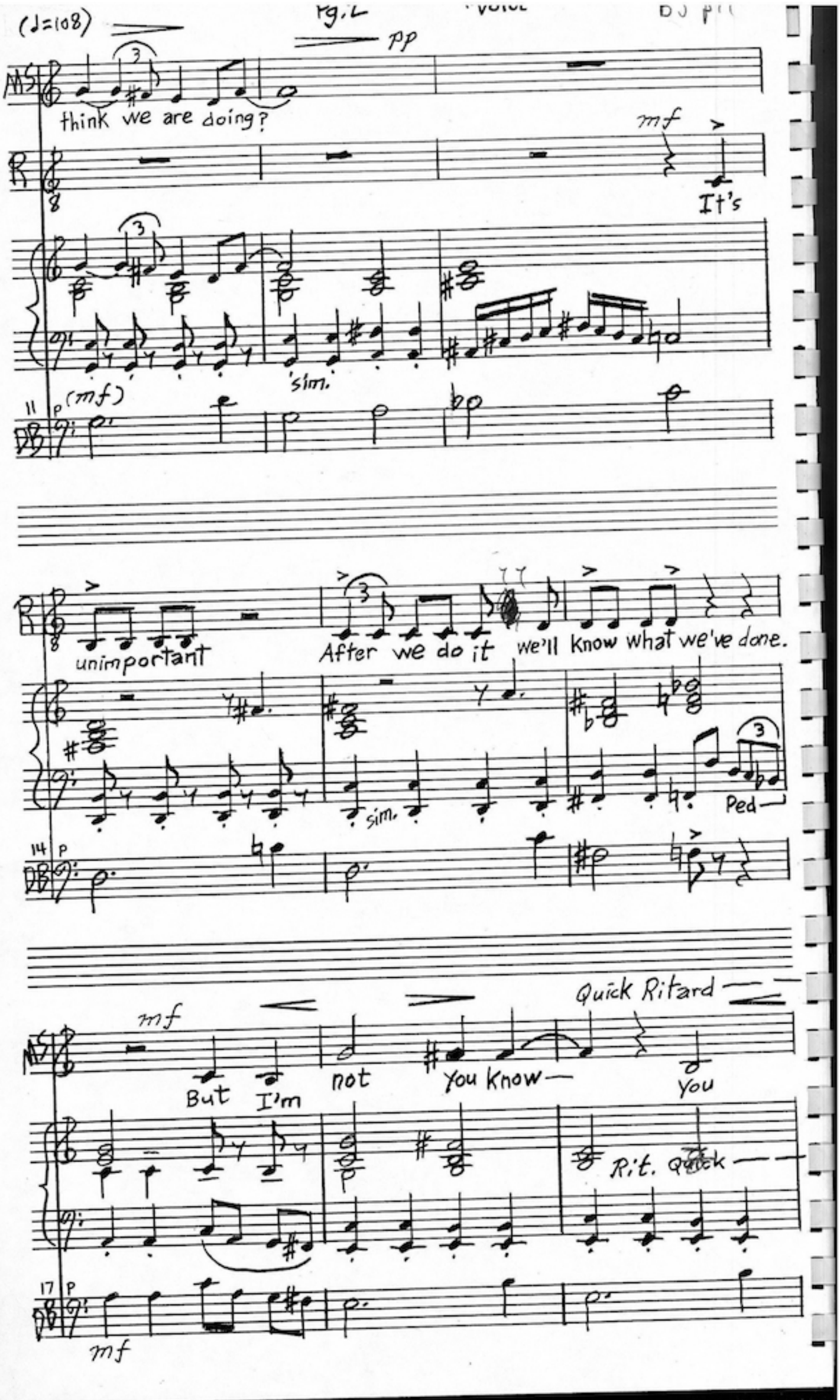
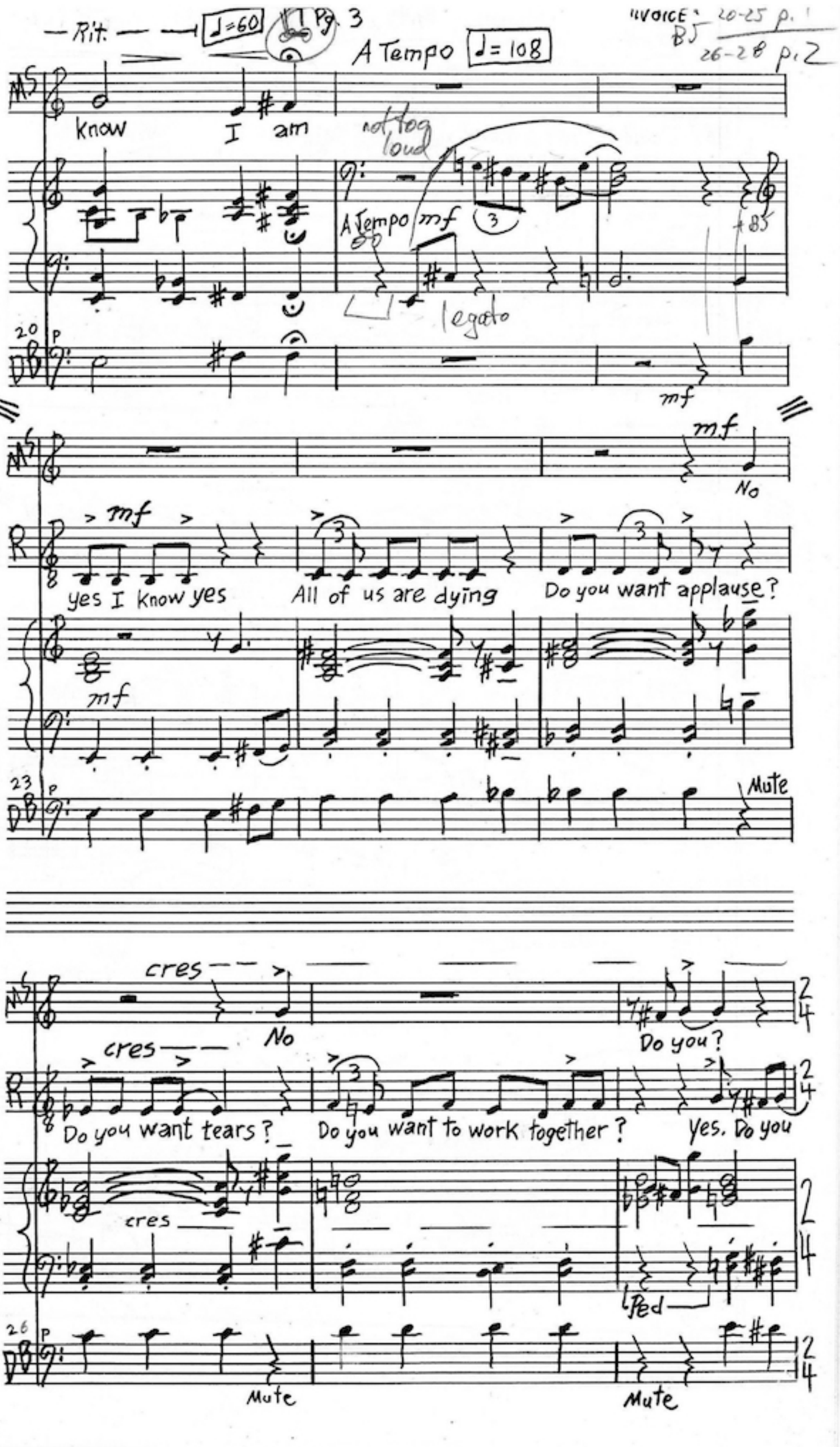
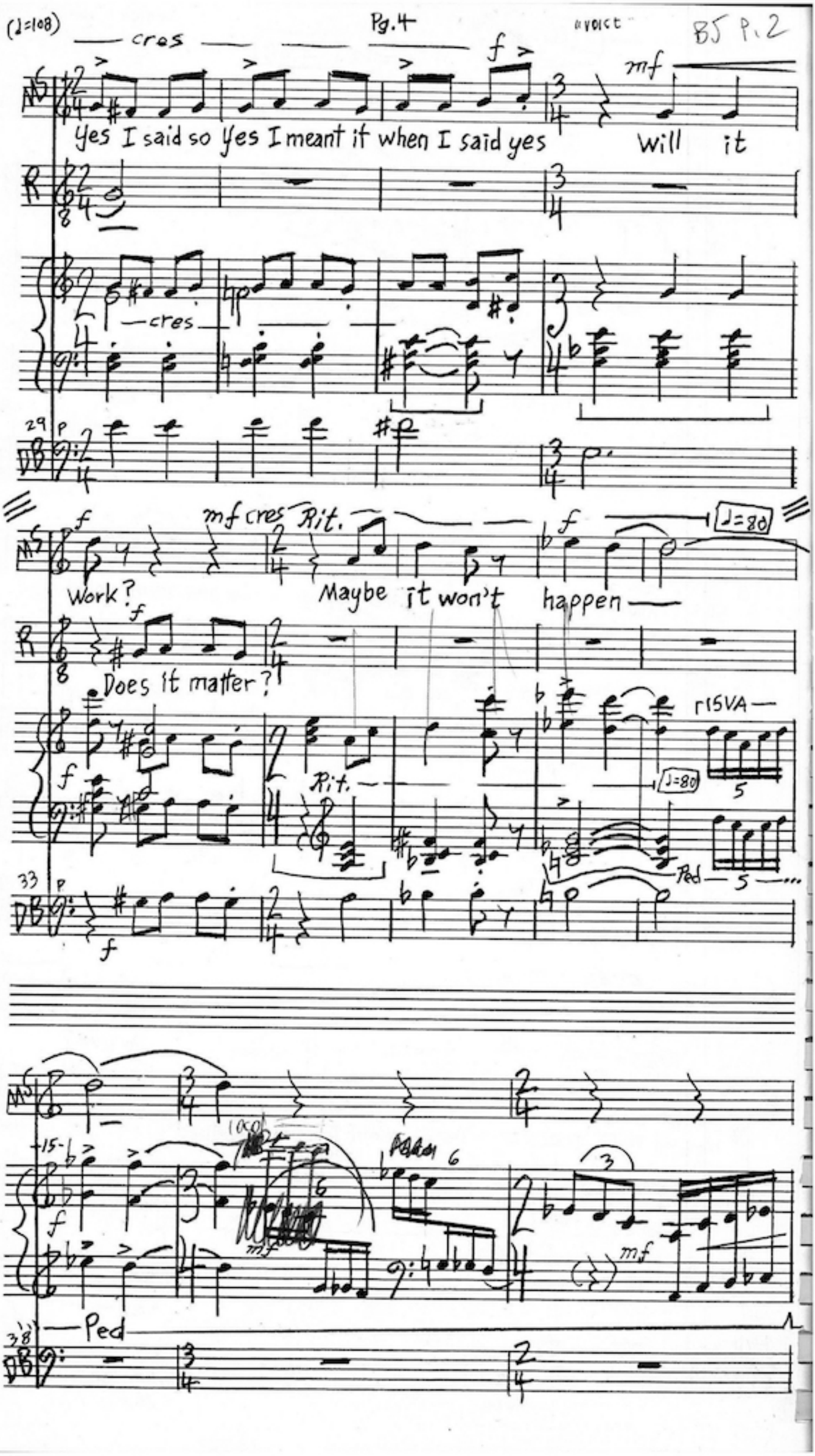
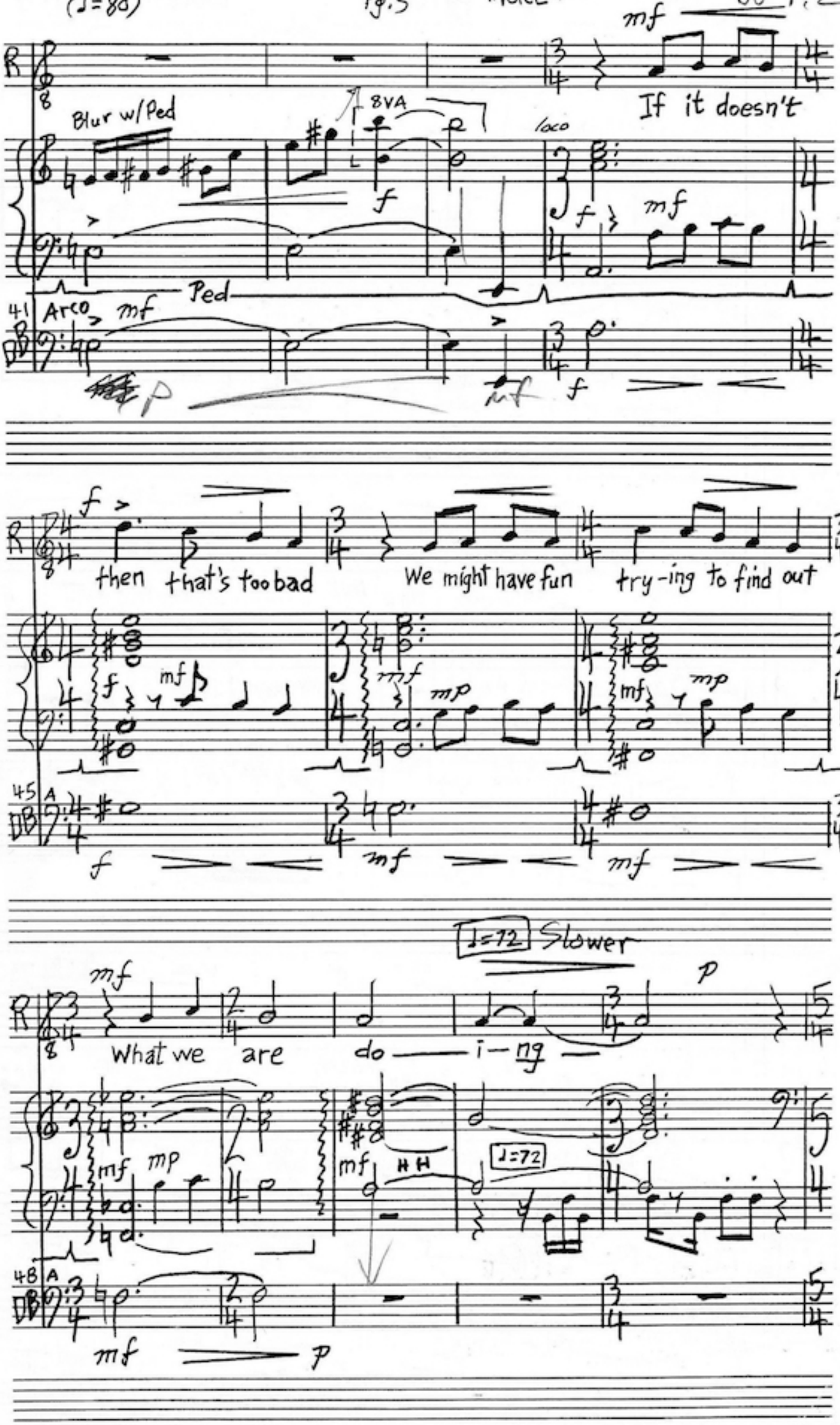
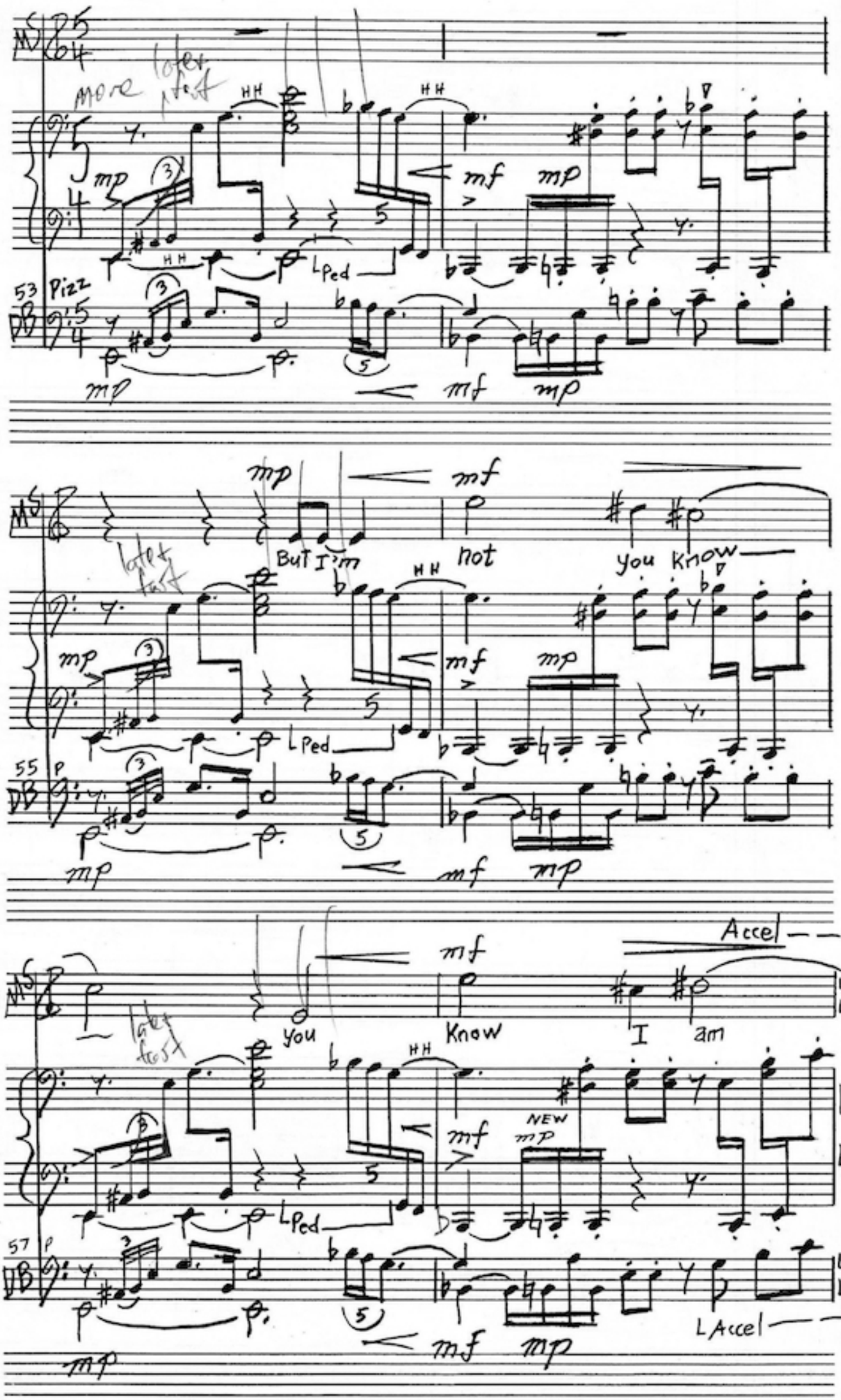

(♩=108)
pp
think we are doing?
mf
It's
sim.
11
p (mf)
unimportant
After we do it we'll know what we've done.
sim.
Ped
14
p
mf
But I'm not you know— you
Quick Ritard
R.t. Quick
17
p
mf

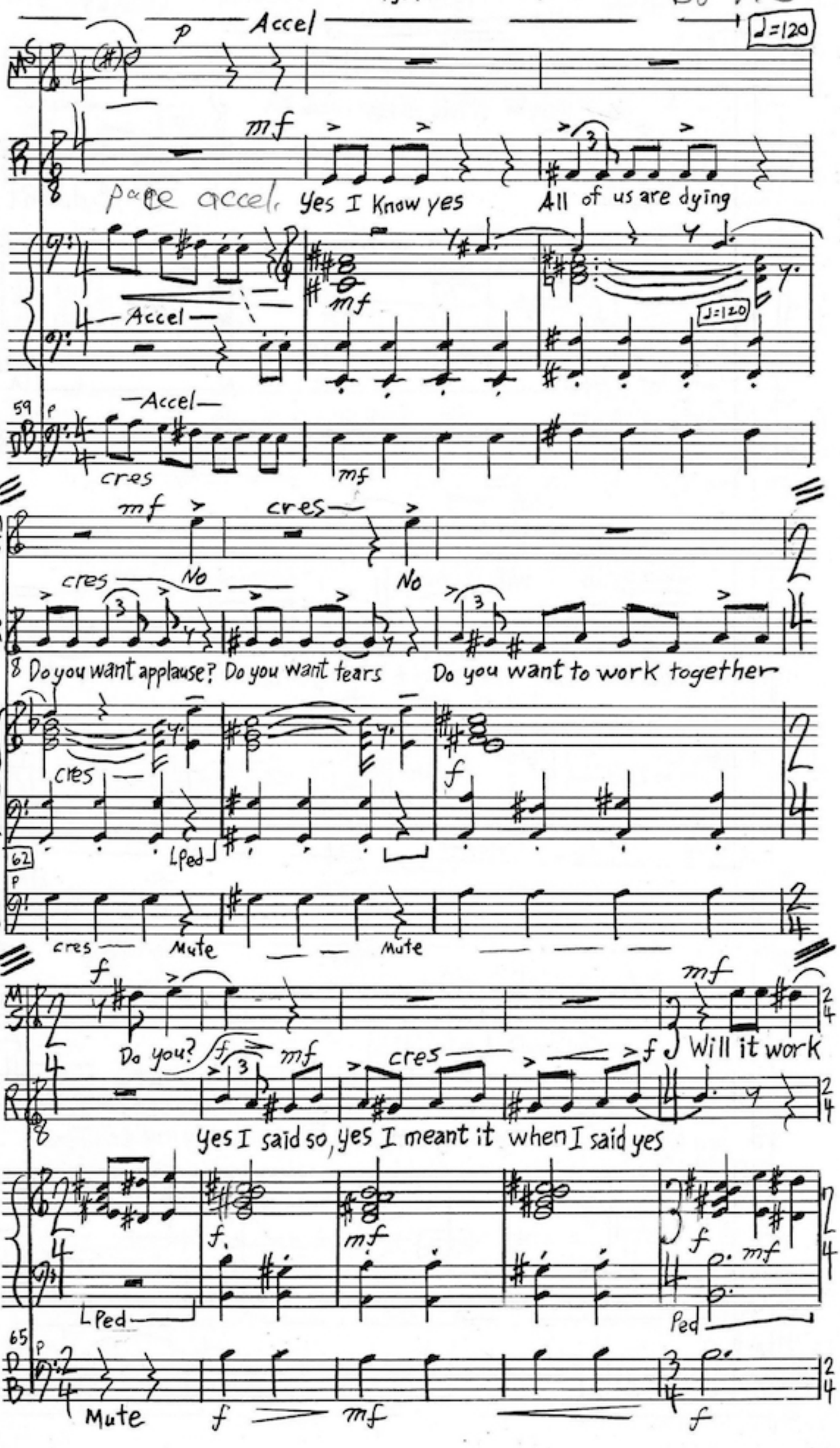

Rit.
♩=60
Pg 3
A Tempo ♩=108
INVOICE: 20-25 p.1
BJ 26-28 p.2
know
I am
not too loud
A Tempo mf
legato
mf
No
yes I know yes
All of us are dying
Do you want applause?
Mute
cres
No
Do you?
Do you want tears?
Do you want to work together?
yes. Do you
Ped
Mute
Mute

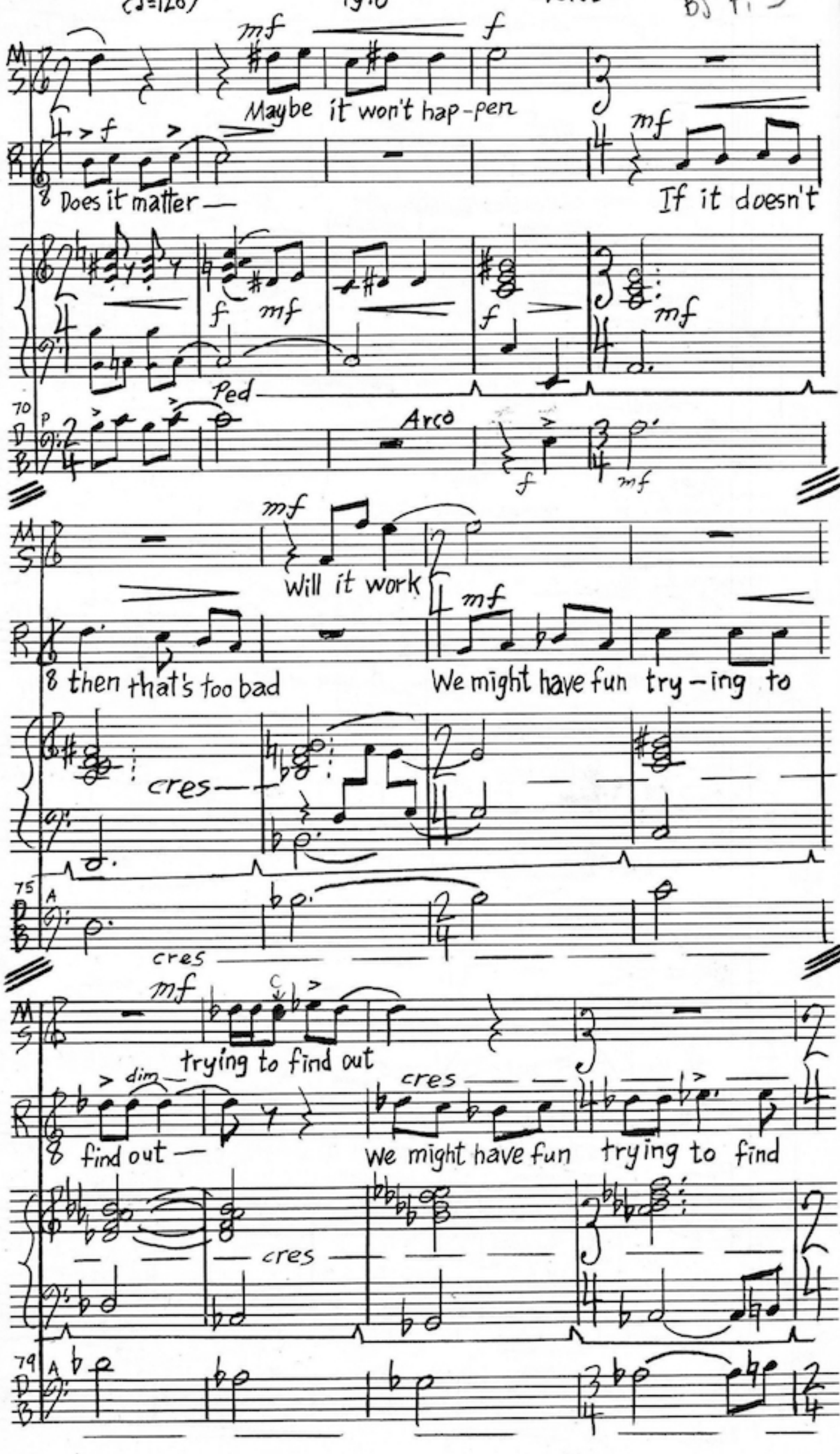

(♩=108)
cres
f
mf
Yes I said so Yes I meant it when I said yes
Will it
cres
29
p
mf cres
Rit.
f
♩=80
Work?
Maybe it won't happen
Does it matter?
15VA
Rit.
♩=80
Ped
33
p
f
15
f
mf
Ped
38

(♩=80) Pg. 5 "VOICE"


mf
If it doesn't
Blur w/Ped
8VA
loco
f
mf
Ped
41
Arco
mf
p
mf
f
then that's too bad
We might have fun
try-ing to find out
45
A
mp
J=72 Slower
What we are
do — i — ng
HH
J=72
48
A


MS
more later fast
HH
mp
mf
Ped
53 Pizz
DB
But I'm not you know
55
Accel
you know I am
NEW
57
Accel


Accel
p
mf
♩=120
pace accel.
Yes I Know yes
All of us are dying
Accel
mf
♩=120
59
p
—Accel—
cres
mf
MS
mf
cres
No
cres
No
R
8 Do you want applause? Do you want tears
Do you want to work together
cres
f
62
p
L Ped
DB
cres
Mute
Mute
f
mf
Do you?
f
mf
cres
f
Will it work
yes I said so, yes I meant it when I said yes
f
mf
f
mf
L Ped
Ped
65
p
Mute
f
mf
f


mf
f
Maybe it won't hap-pen
mf
Does it matter —
If it doesn't
f
mf
f
mf
Ped
70
P
Arco
f
mf
mf
Will it work
mf
8 then that's too bad
We might have fun try-ing to
cres
75
A
cres
mf
trying to find out
dim
cres
8 find out —
We might have fun trying to find
cres
79
A

"VOICE"

BS 83-88 P.3
89-97 P.4

(♩=120)

Rit.

gliss

Will it work? Maybe it won't ha——ppen

out——

Ritard——

83

♩=80

Ritard

If it doesn't then that's too bad we might have fun

Ritard

89

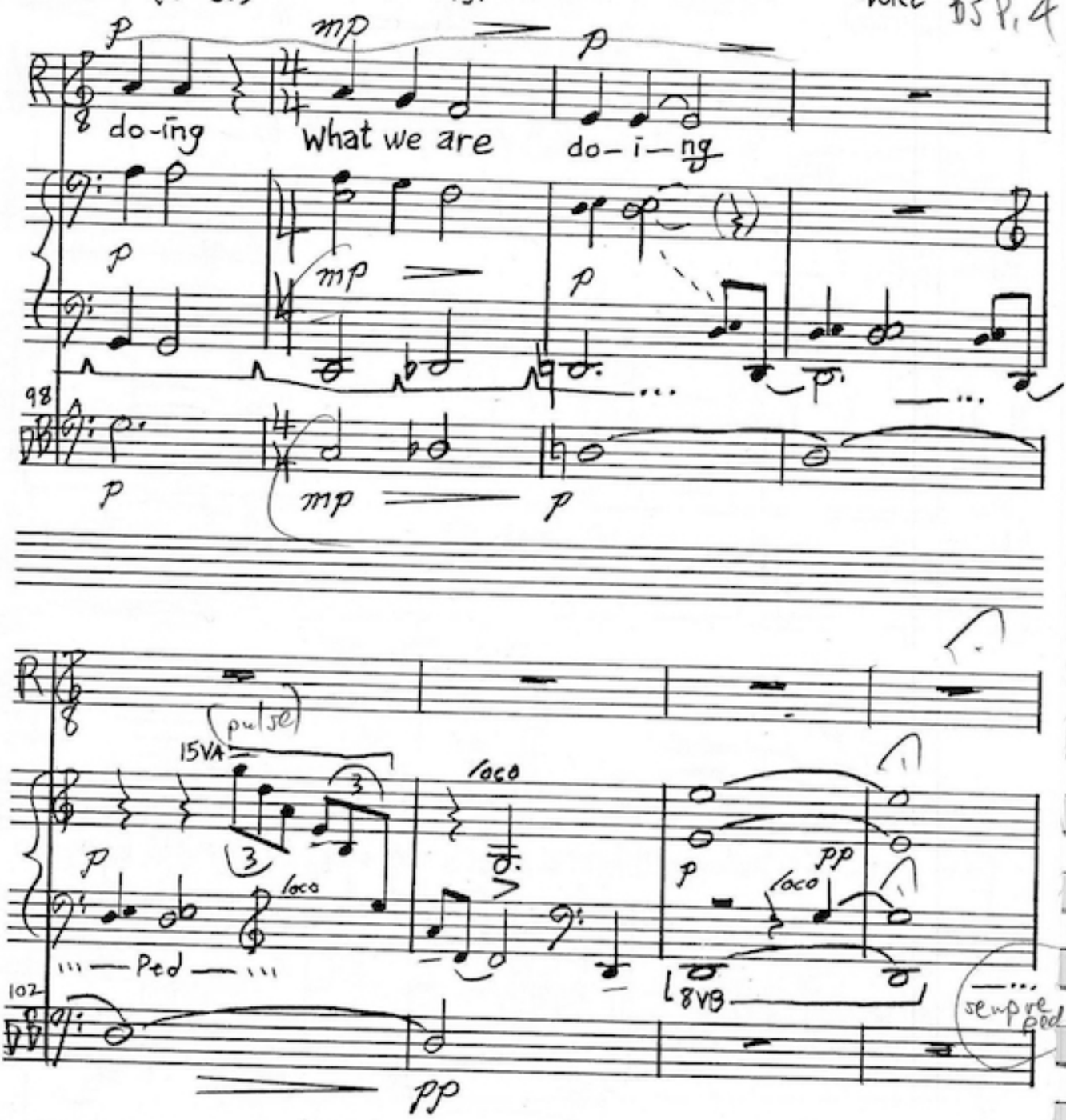
♩=60

trying to find out trying to find out What we are

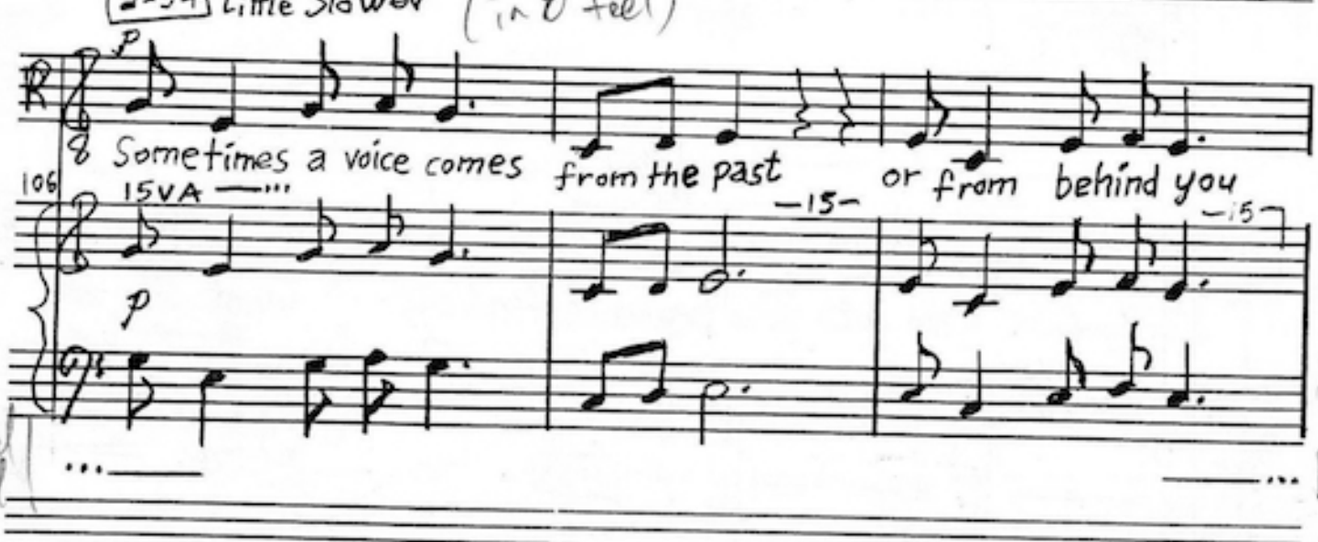
♩=60

94

(♩=60) Pg. 10



♩=54 Little Slower (in 8 feel)



Pg.11

(♩=54)

(p) ossi: higher

mp p

in the same room, and you turn and they are there

109 8VA 8

(p) mp p

Accel ♩=80

p cres mf

But with her it was diff'rent

112 8VA 8 loco

Accel p cres mf

mf f f mf

She was a voice on the telephone

PB/Melody: p.7

mf cres f ff mf

117 Arco

mp cres f mf

mp mf mp

She was a voice on the telephone That is

JOFT

mf mp

122 A

p mf mp

mf Ritard mp cres

where her suppleness and youth and grace and strength and the

NOT TOO SLOW HERE!

mf mp Rit. cres

127 A

mf p cres

♩=60

mf mp

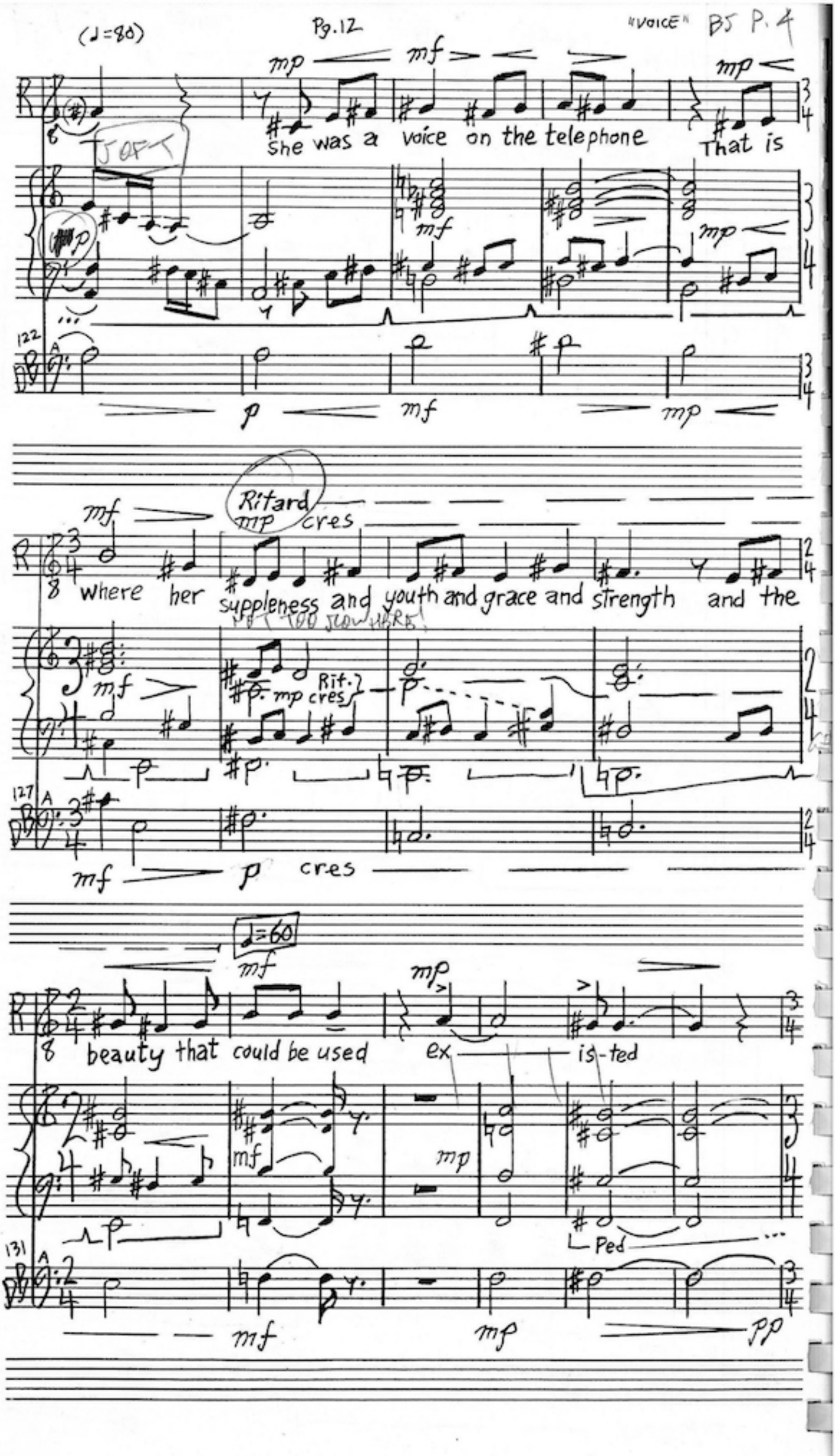
beauty that could be used ex — is-ted

mf mp

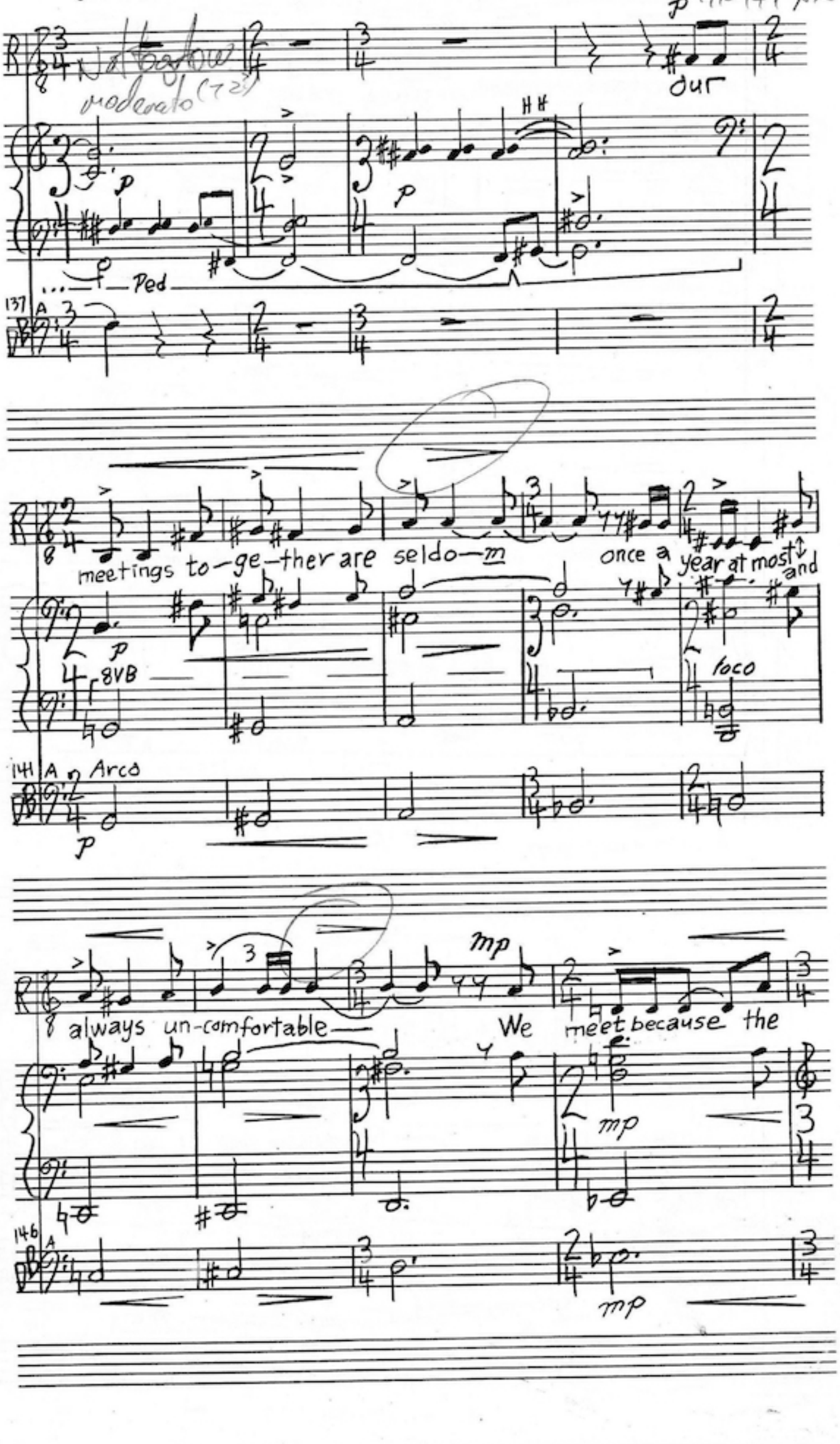
Ped

131 A

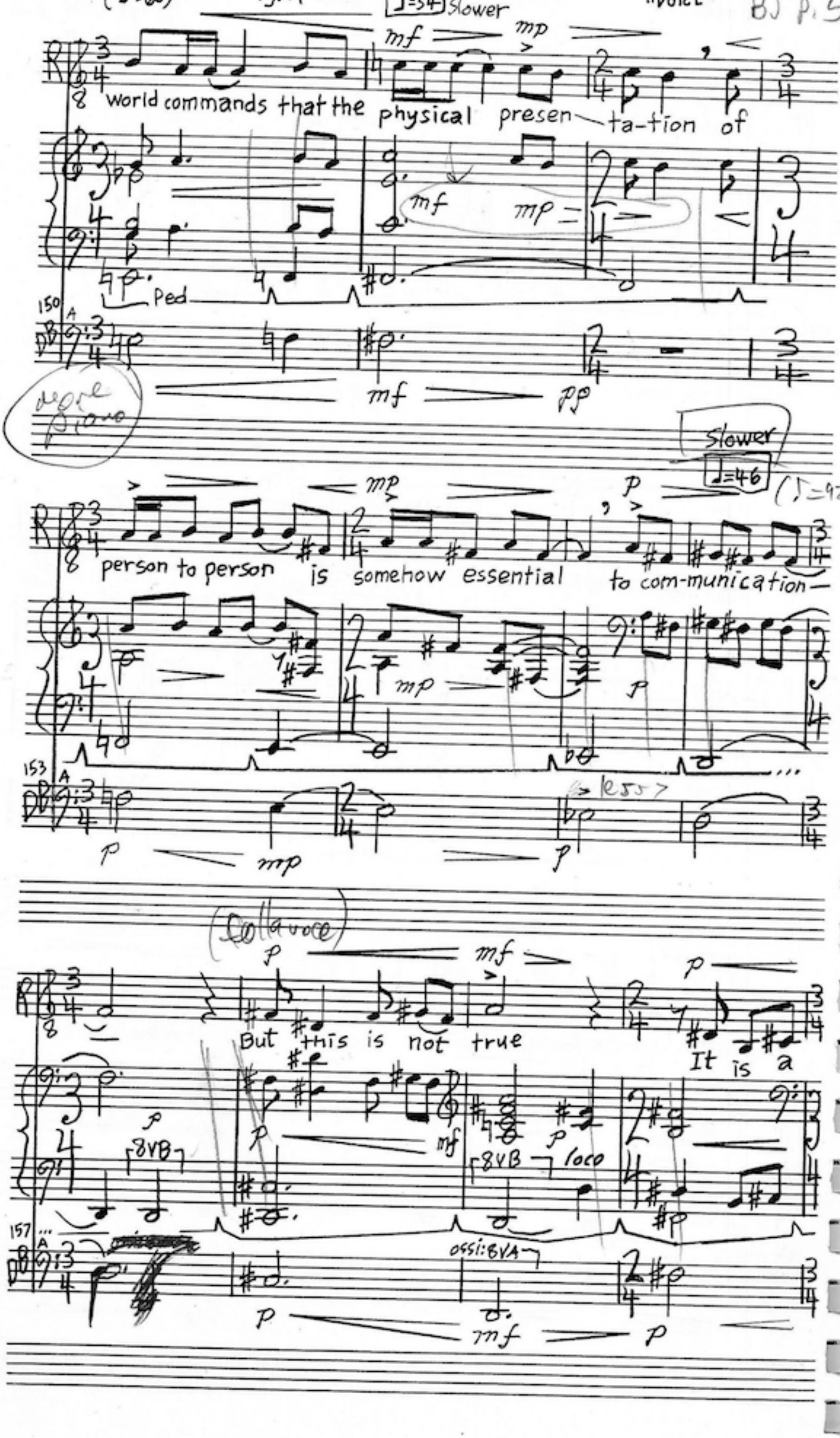
mf mp pp

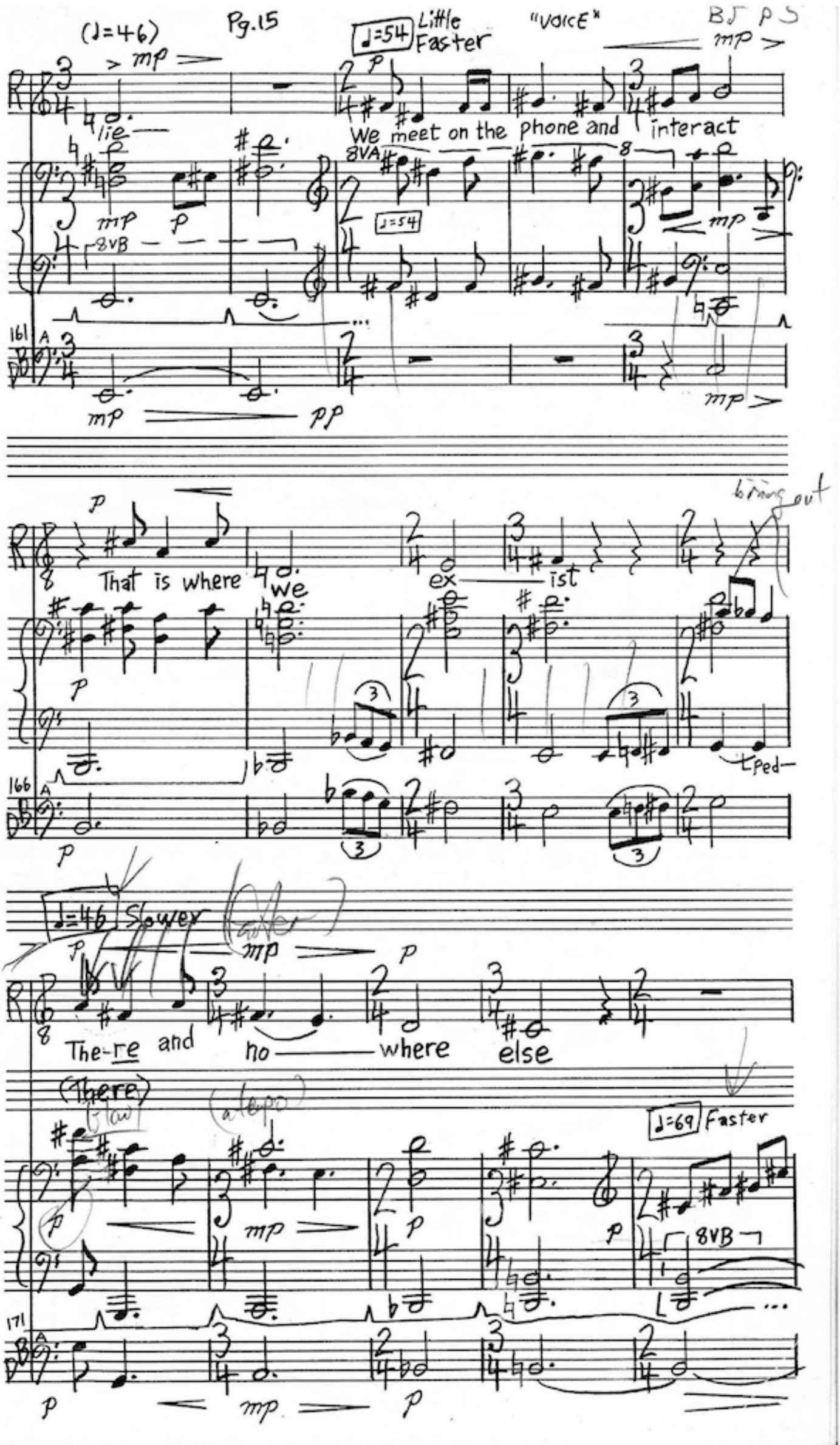


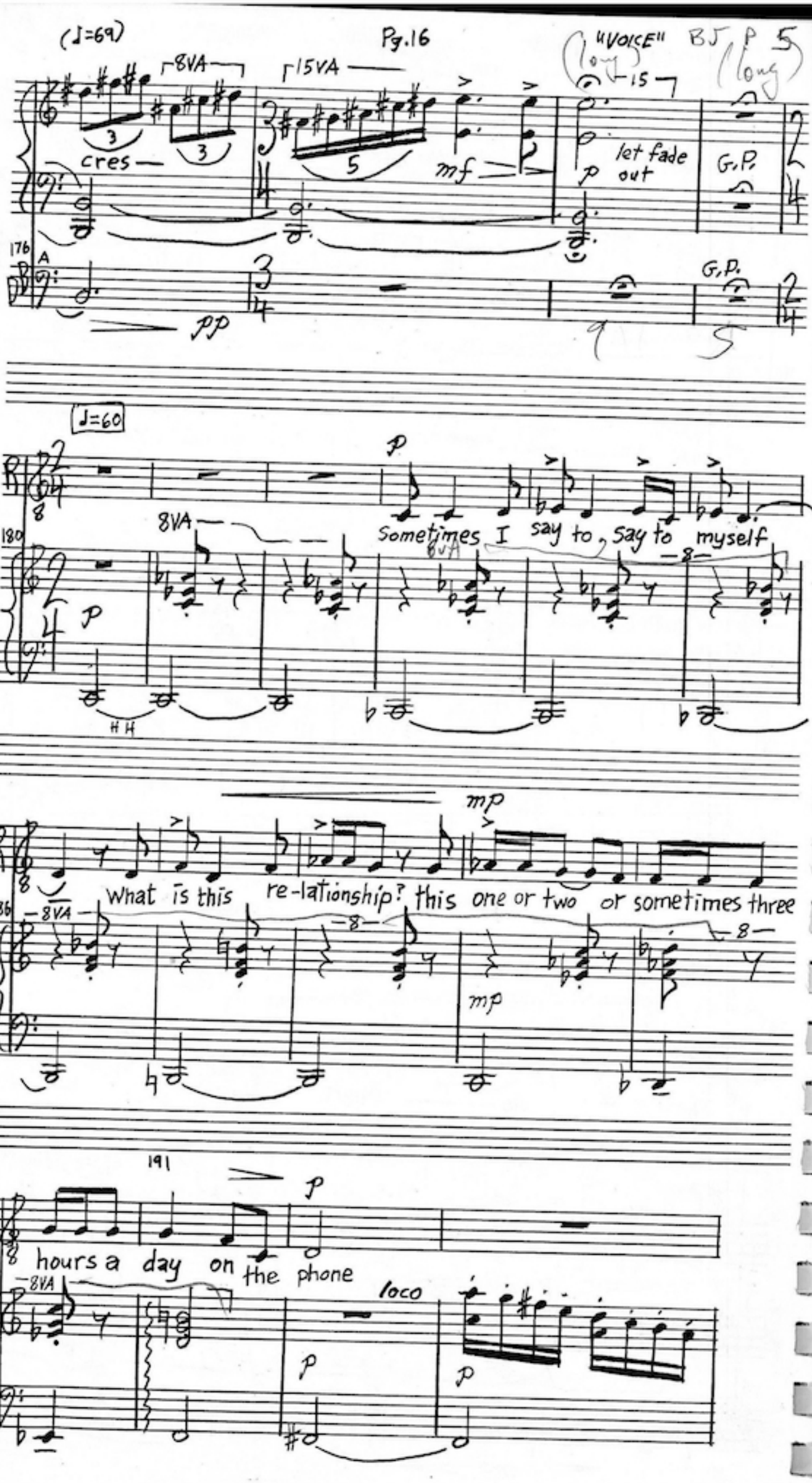
(♩=60) Pg. 13 "VOICE" BJ 131-140 p. 7 141-149 A.S

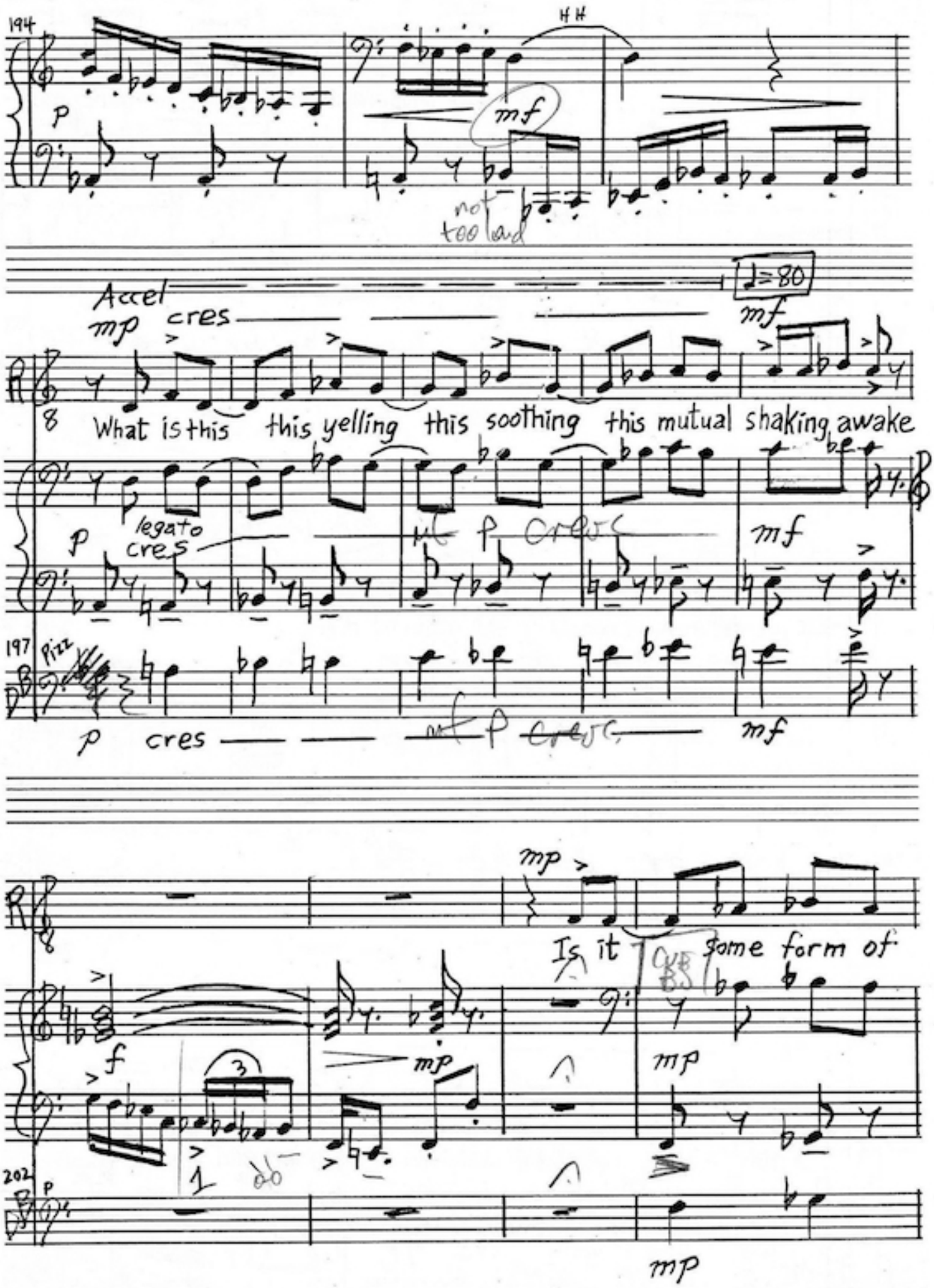


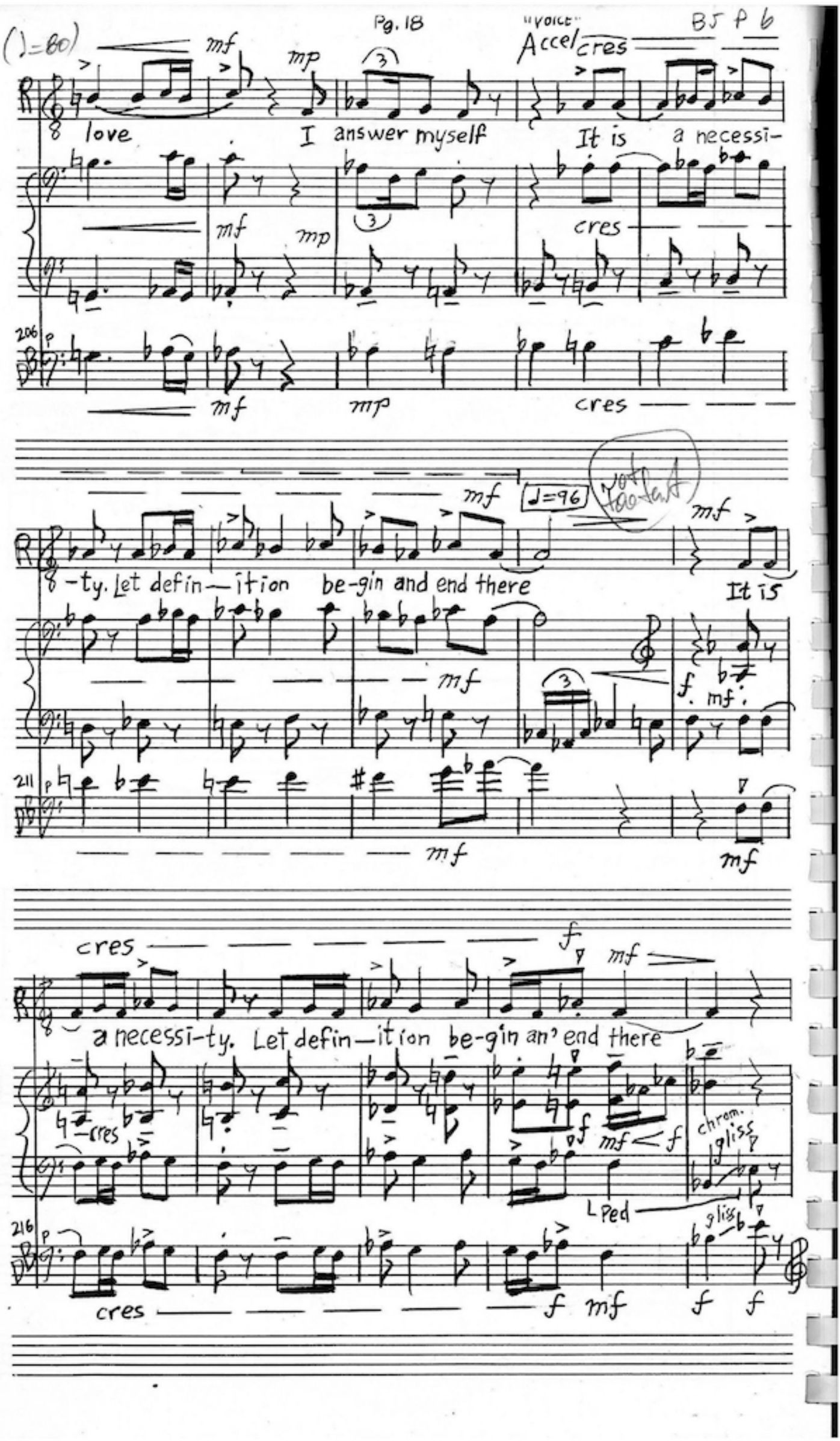
(♩=60) Pg. 14 ♩=54 Slower

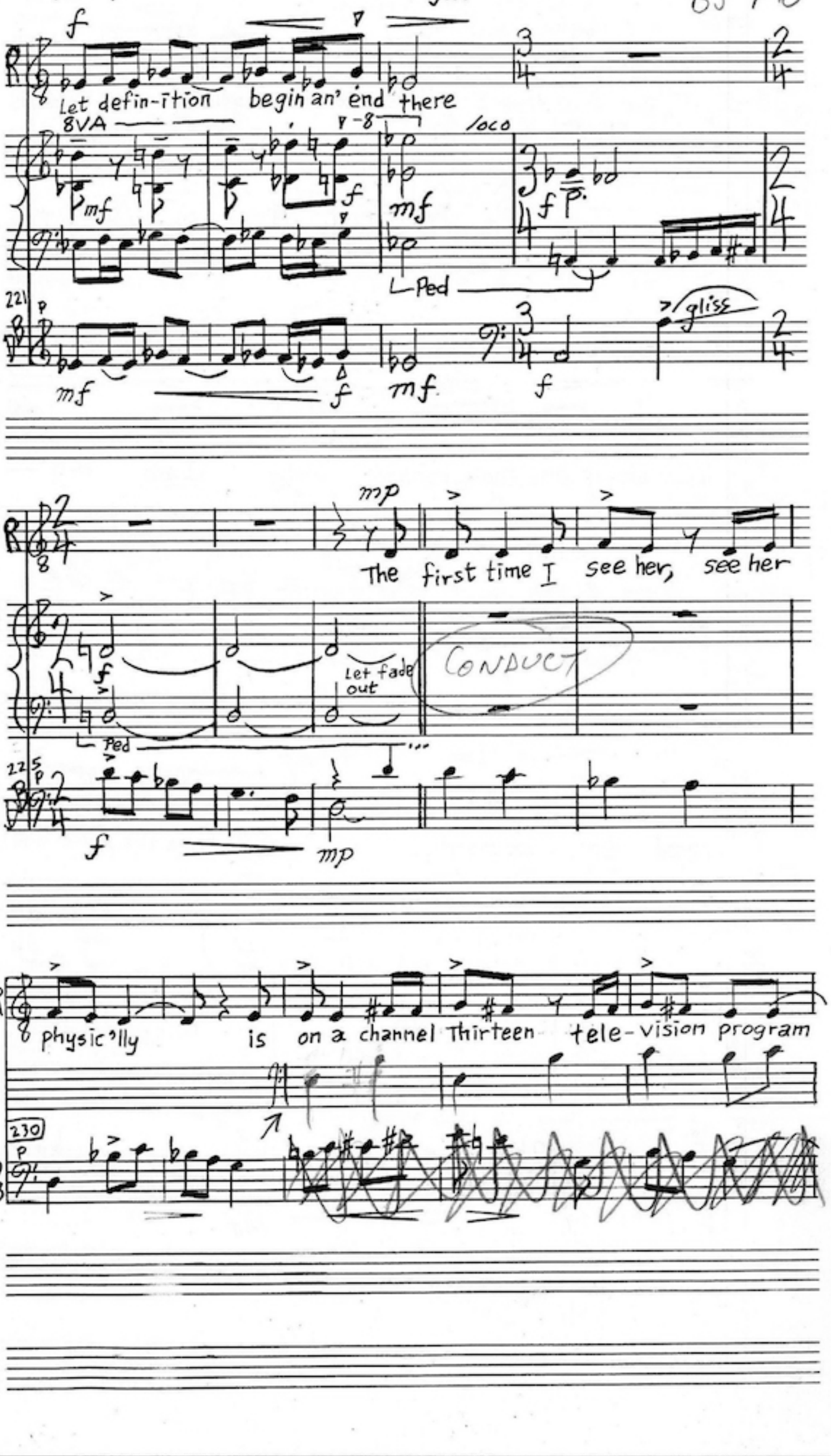


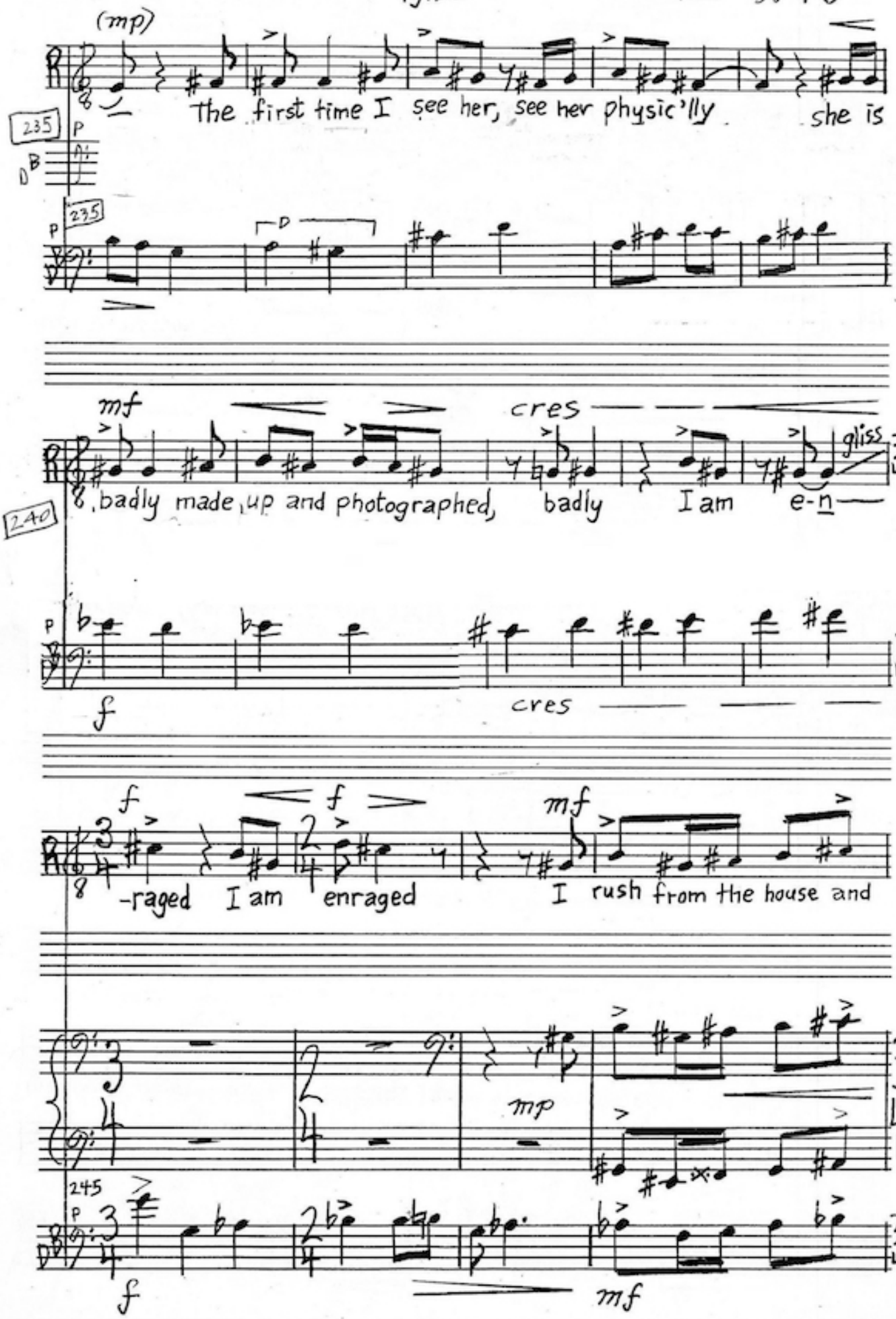

(♩=46)
Pg.15
♩=54 Little Faster
"VOICE"
BJ PS
lie
We meet on the phone and interact
8VA
8VB
♩=54
161
That is where we ex ist
bring out
ped
166
♩=46 Slower
The-re and no where else
(There)
(slow)
(a tempo)
♩=69 Faster
8VB
171

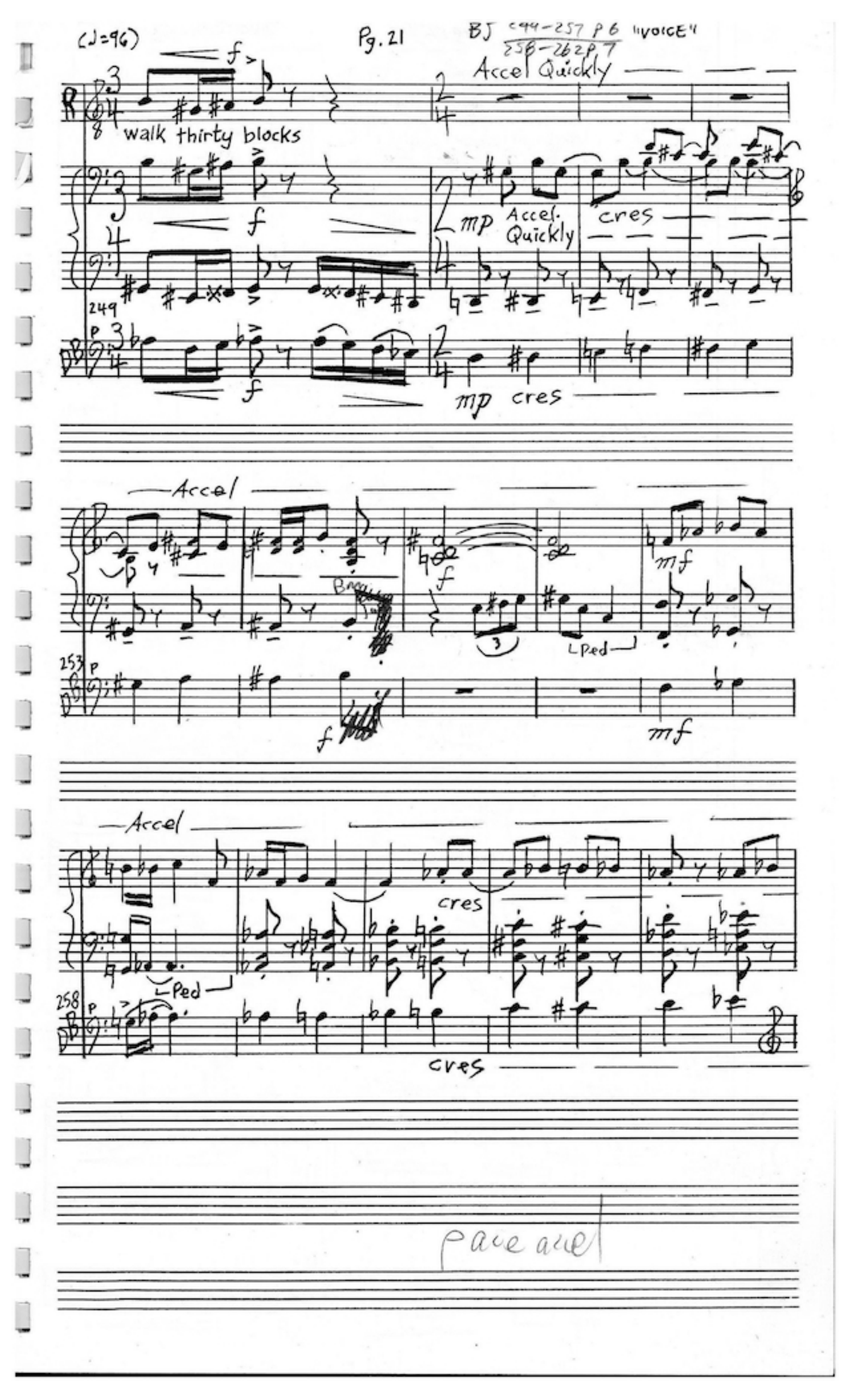

(♩=69)
"VOICE" BJ
(long)
8VA
15VA
cres
mf
p
let fade out
G.P.
176
A
pp
♩=60
180
8VA
Sometimes I say to, say to myself
BJA
HH
mp
What is this re-lationship? this one or two or sometimes three
186
8VA
mp
191
hours a day on the phone
8VA
loco

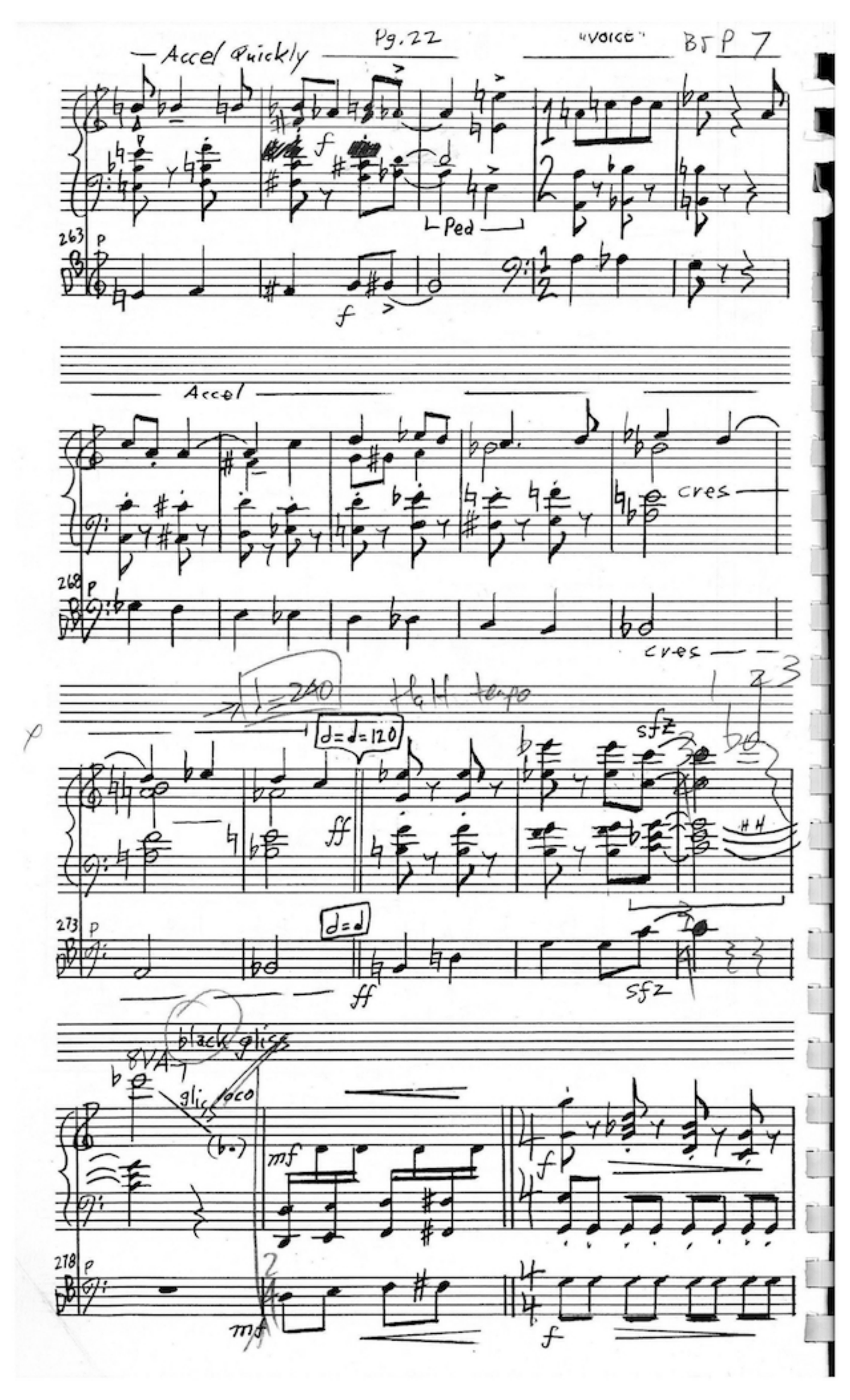

194
HH
mf
not too loud
Accel
mp cres
♩=80
mf
What is this this yelling this soothing this mutual shaking awake
p legato cres
mf
197
Pizz
p cres
mf
mp
Is it some form of
f
mp
202
mp

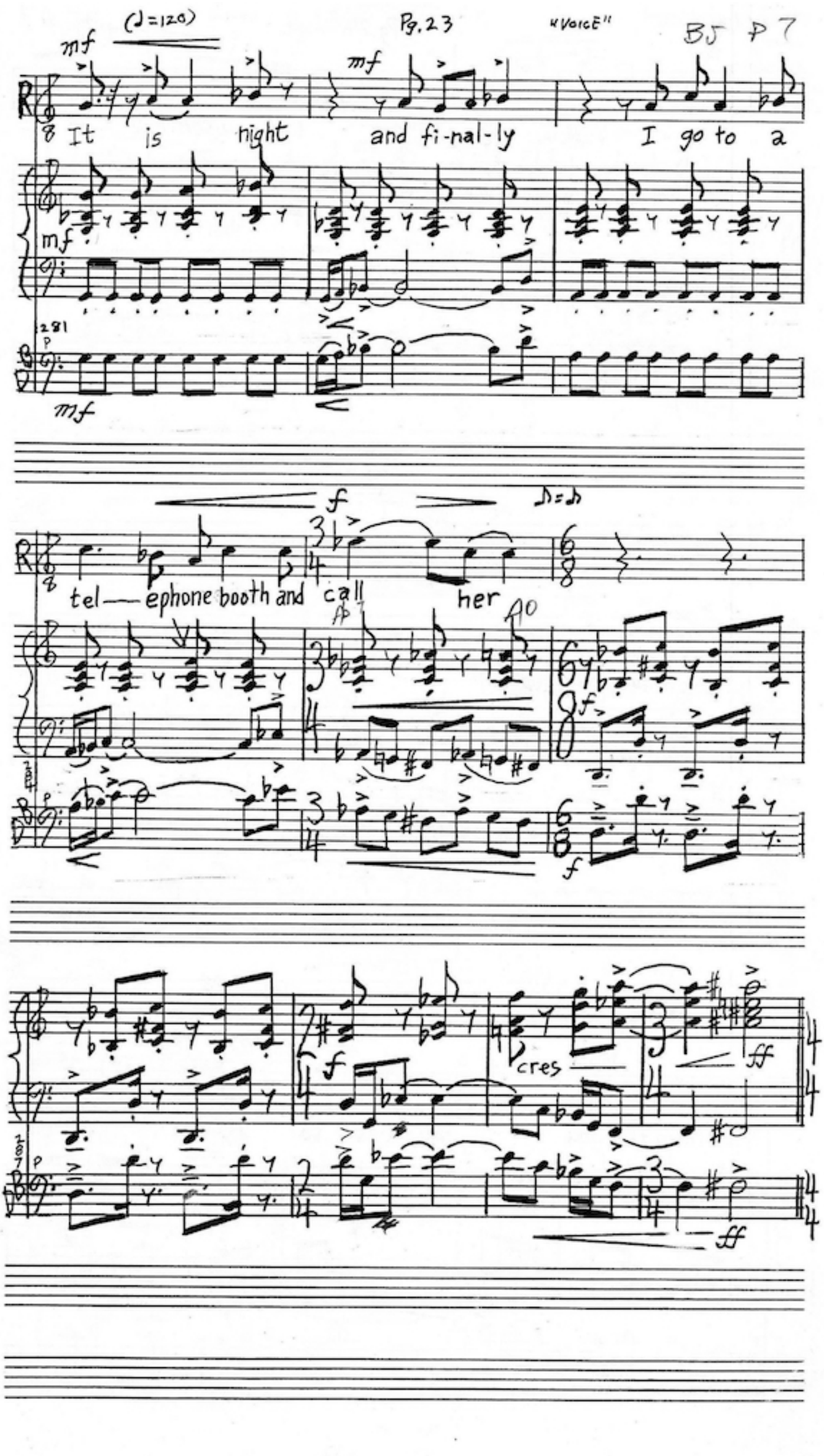

(♩=80)
mf
mp
"voice"
Accel
cres
BJ P 6
love
I answer myself
It is
a necessi-
206
mf
mp
cres
mf
♩=96
not too fast
-ty. Let defin—ition be-gin and end there
It is
211
mf
mf
cres
f
mf
a necessi-ty. Let defin—ition be-gin an' end there
cres
mf < f
chrom. gliss
L Ped
216
cres
f mf
f f
gliss

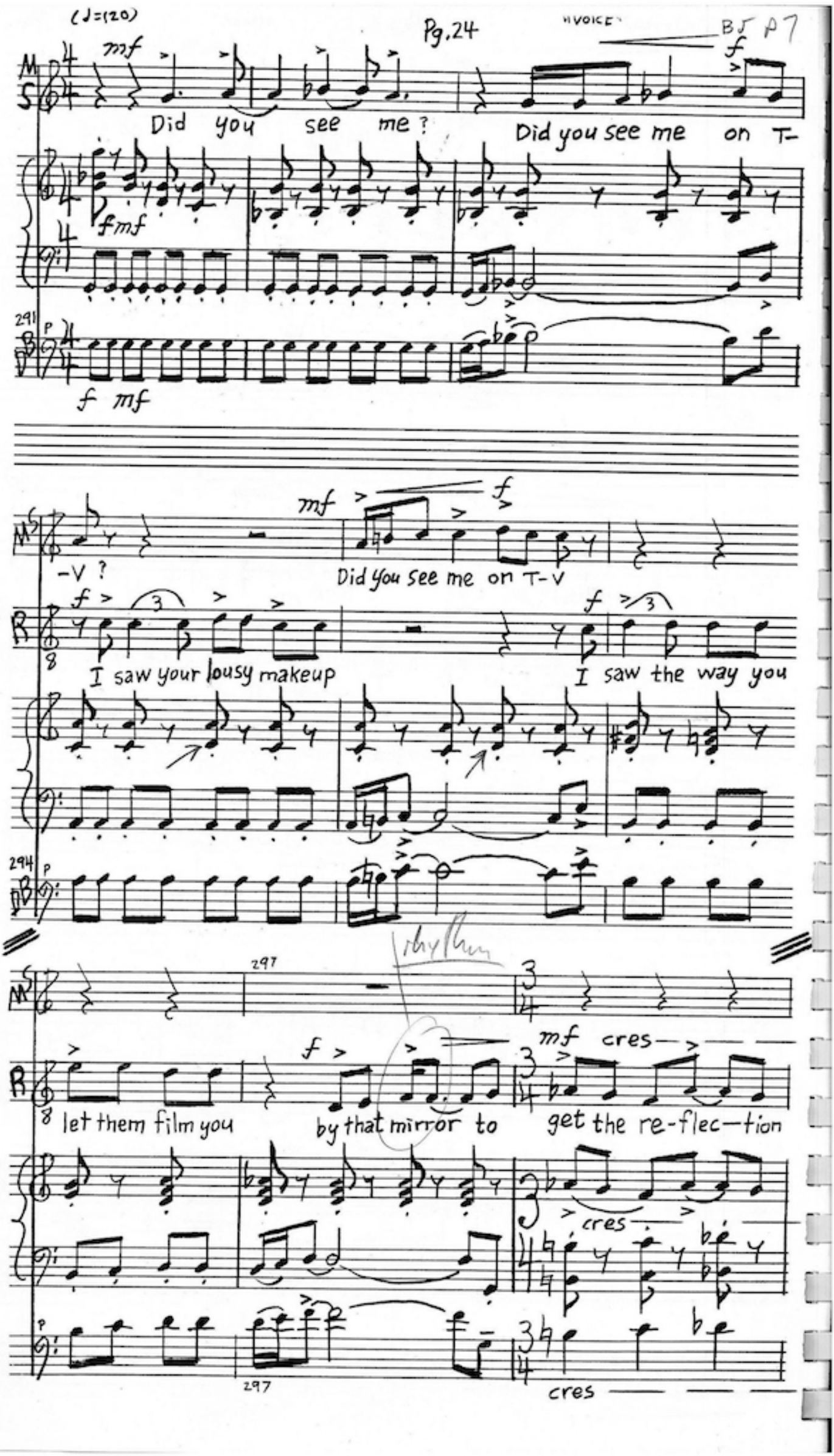

f
Let defin-ition begin an' end there
8VA
loco
mf
Ped
gliss
The first time I see her, see her
Let fade out
CONDUCT
physic'lly is on a channel Thirteen tele-vision program
DB

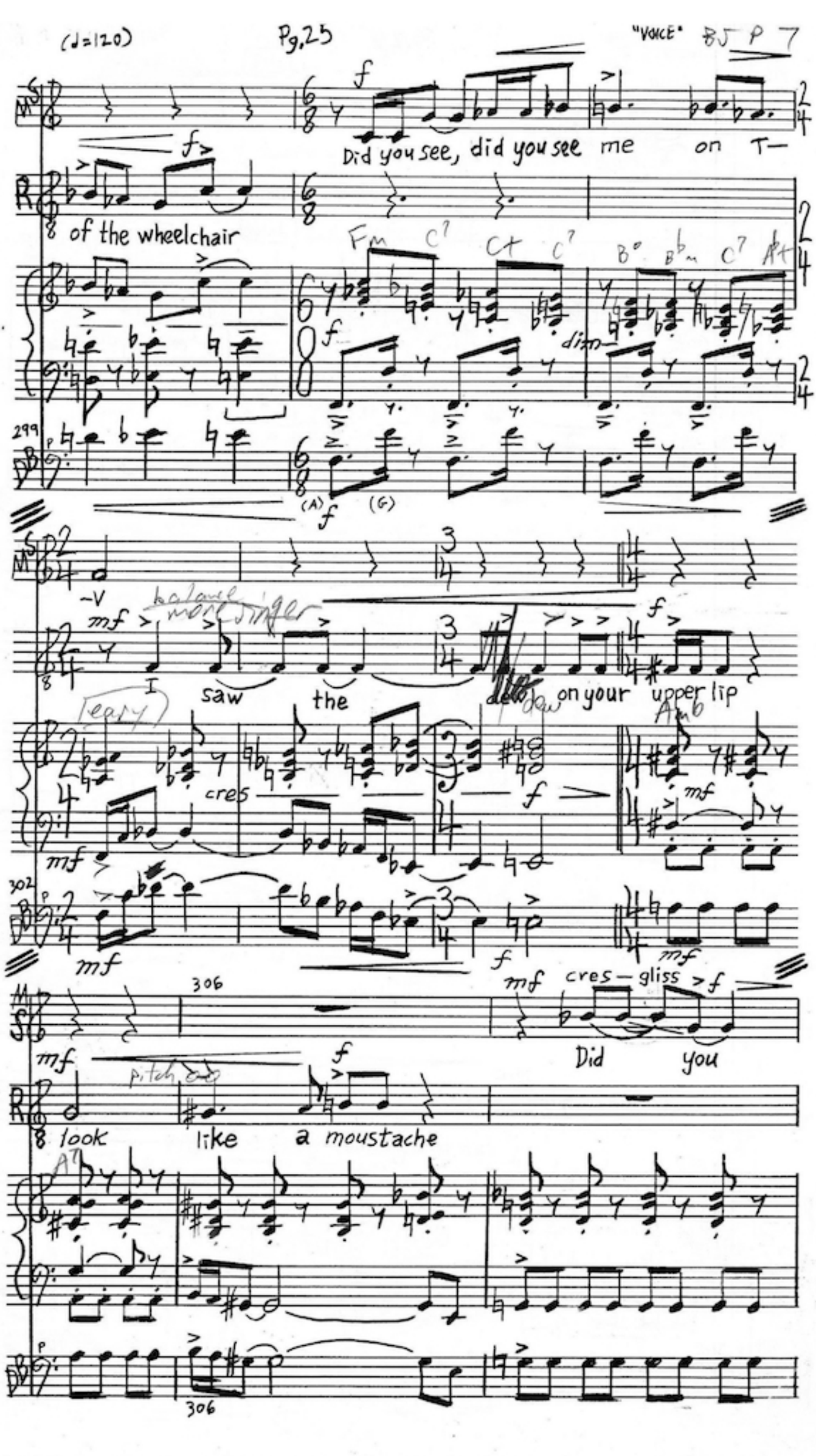

(mp)
The first time I see her, see her physic'lly she is
235
P
235
P
mf
cres
gliss
badly made up and photographed, badly I am e-n
240
P
f
cres
f
f
mf
-raged I am enraged I rush from the house and
mp
245
P
f
mf


(♩=96)
Pg. 21
BJ c44-257 p6 "VOICE"
258-262 p7
Accel Quickly
walk thirty blocks
f
mp
Accel. Quickly
cres
249
DB
mp cres
Accel
Ped
mf
253
Accel
cres
Ped
258
cres
pace accel

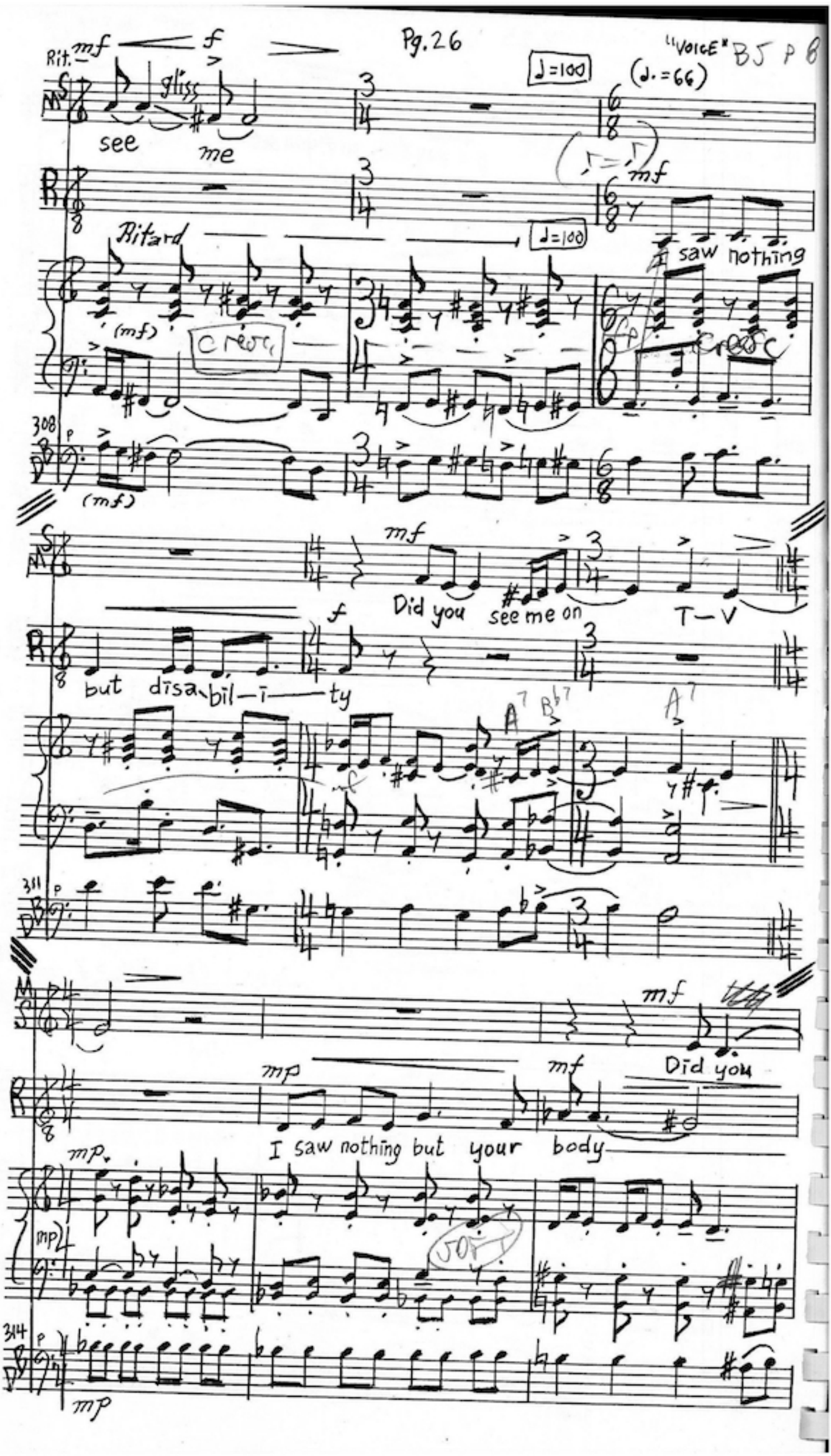

Pg. 22
"voice"
BJP 7
Accel Quickly
Ped
263
Accel
cres
268
cres
d=240
H&H tempo
d=d=120
sfz
ff
273
d=d
ff
sfz
black gliss
8VA
gliss loco
(b.)
mf
278
mf
f

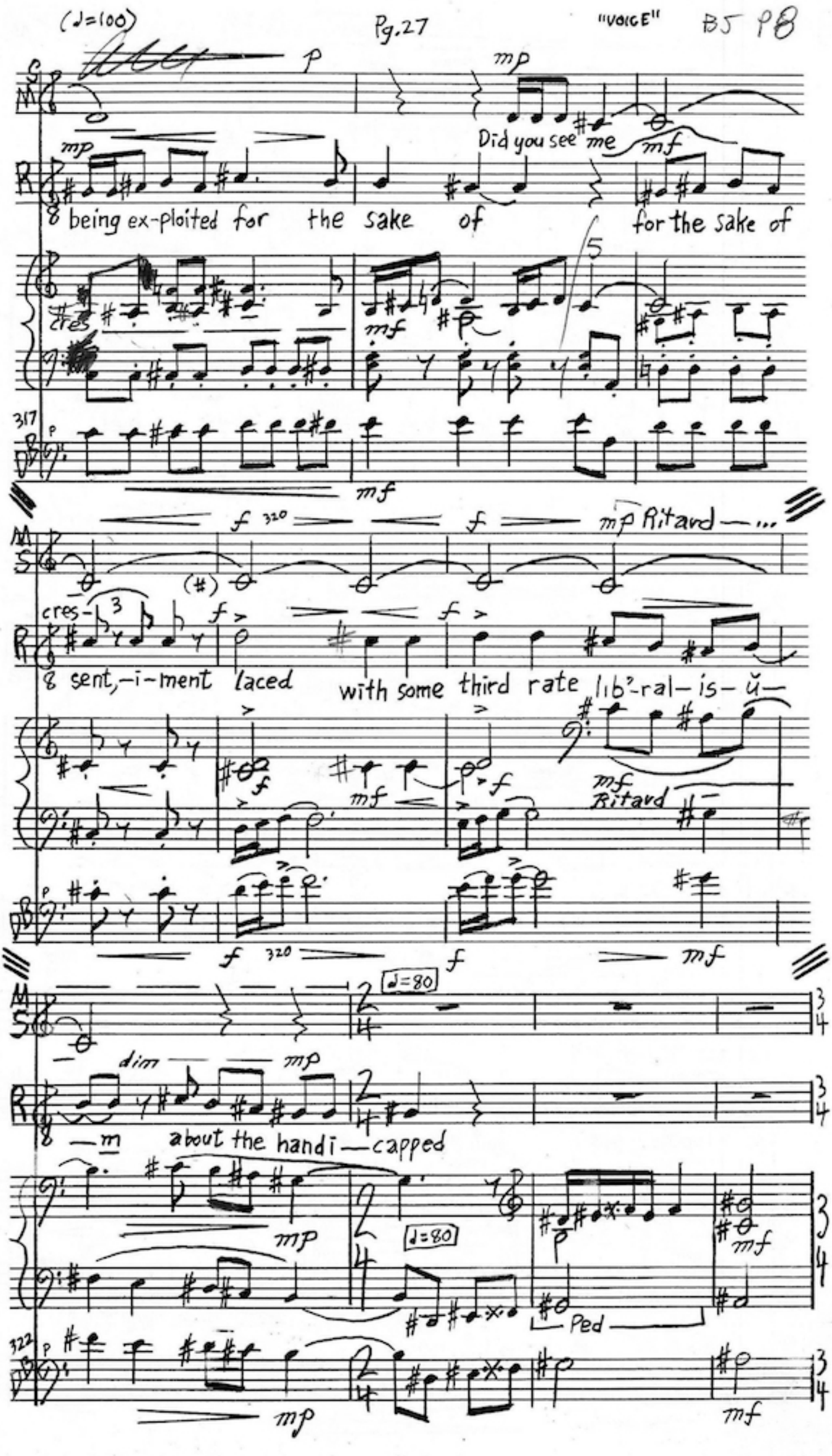

(♩=120)
mf
It is night and fi-nal-ly I go to a
tel—ephone booth and call her
f
cres
ff

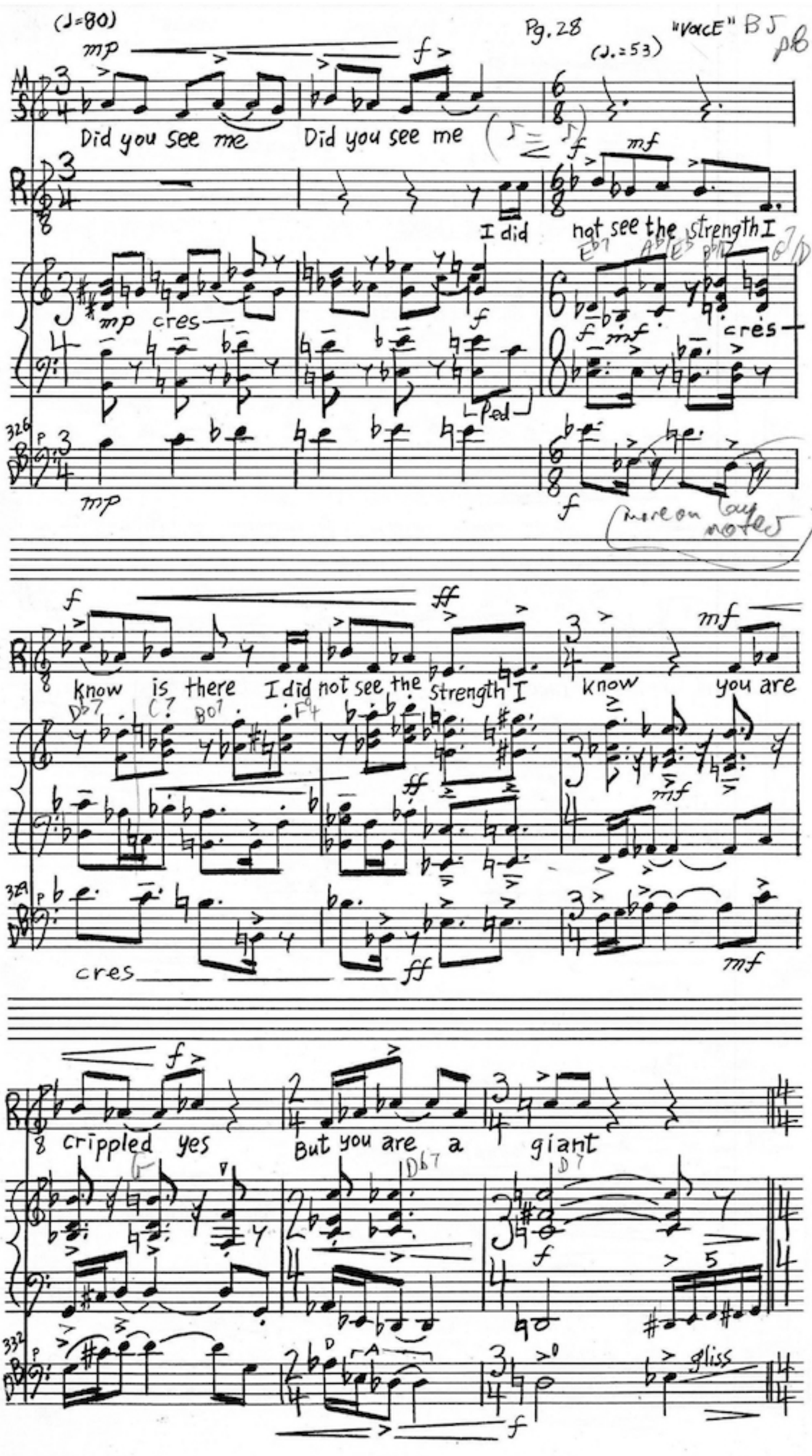

(♩=120)
mf
Did you see me?
f
Did you see me on T-
fmf
291
f mf
-V?
mf
f
Did you see me on T-V
I saw your lousy makeup
I saw the way you
294
297
mf cres
let them film you
f
by that mirror to
get the re-flec-tion
cres
297
cres

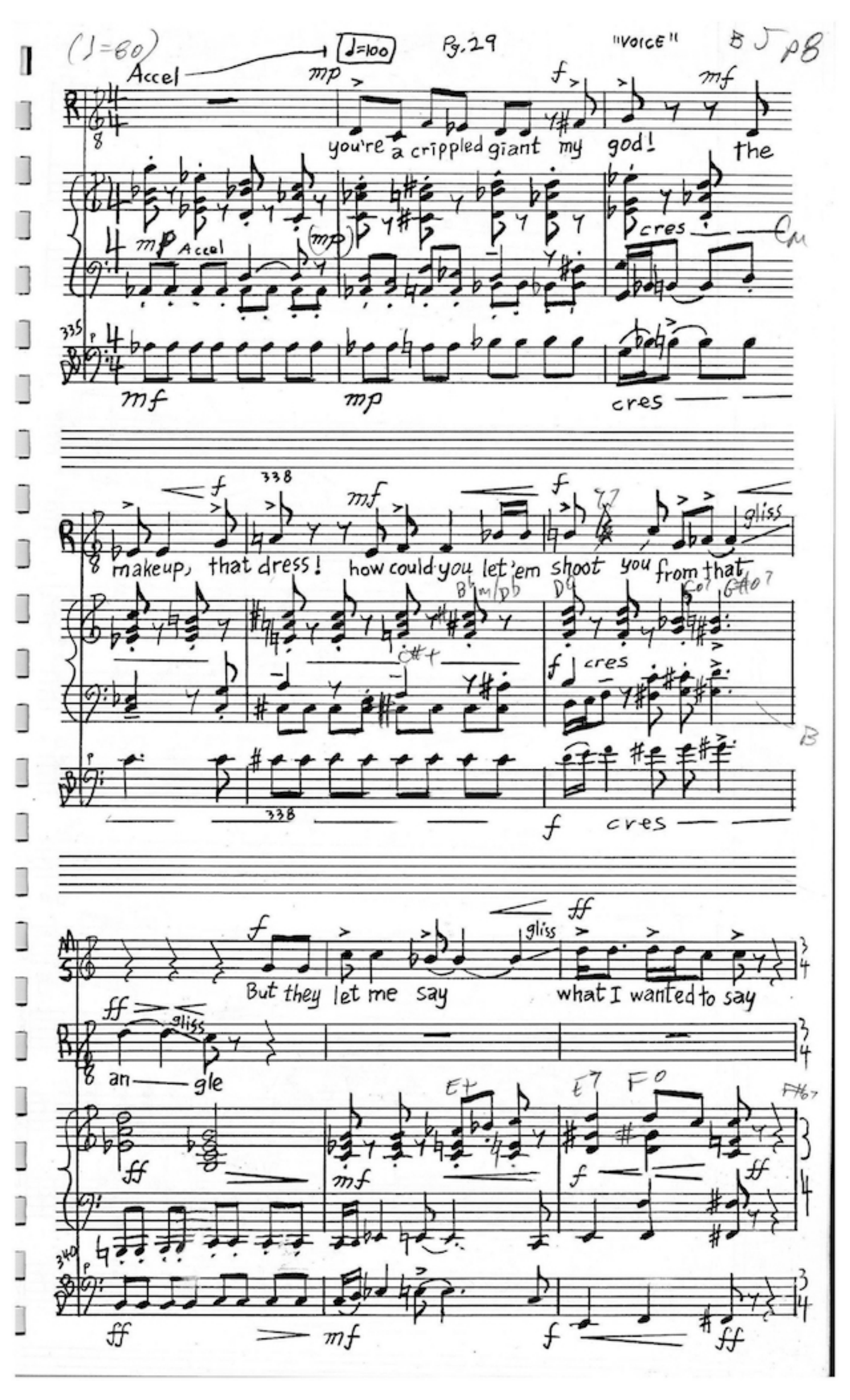

(♩=120)
Pg.25
"VOICE"
BJ P 7
Did you see, did you see me on T-
of the wheelchair
Fm C7 C+ C7 B° B♭m C7 A♭+
dim
299
(A) (G)
balance more singer
I saw the dew on your upper lip
(easy)
cres
Amb
302
306
cres — gliss
Did you
pitch
look like a moustache
A7
306

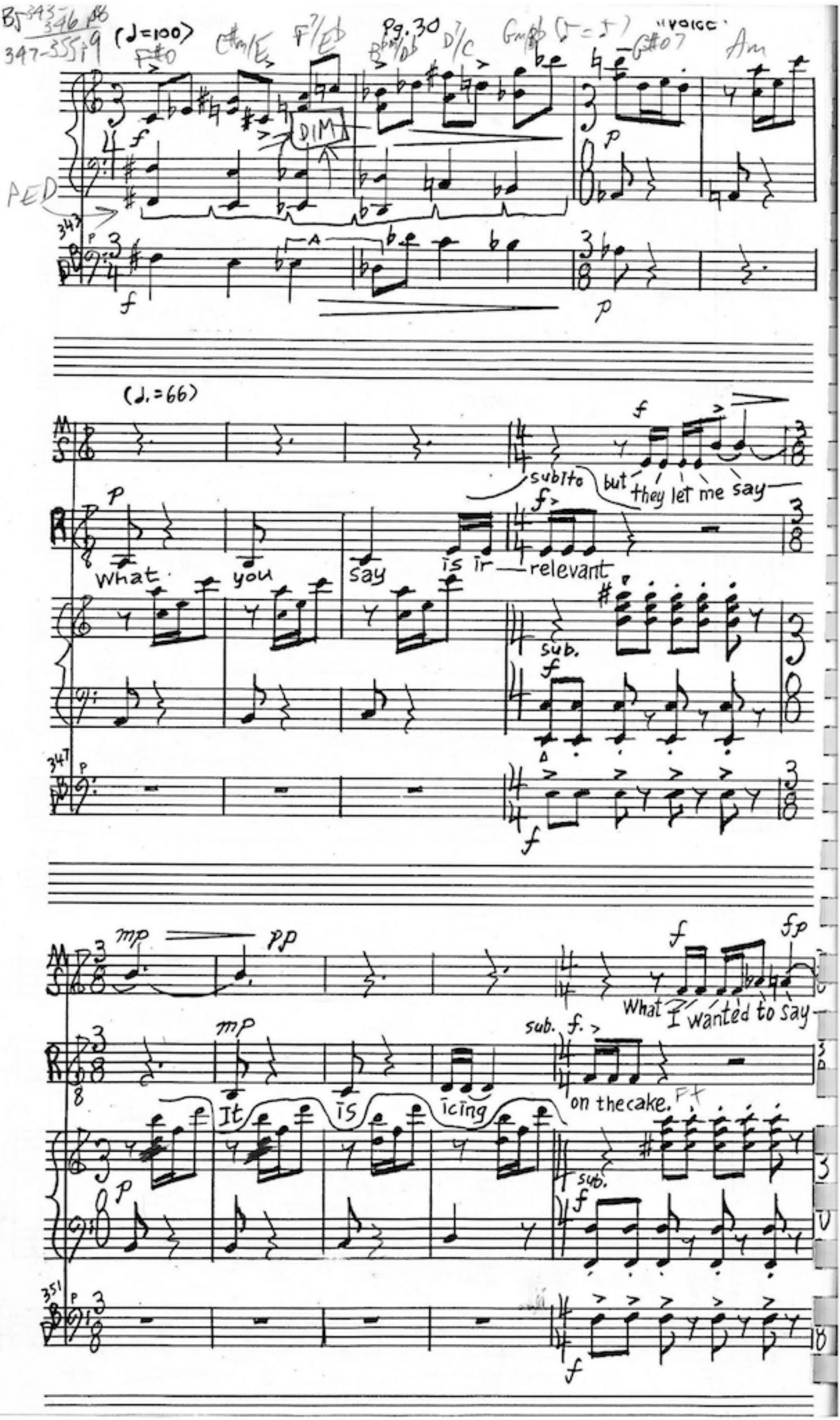
"VOICE" BJ P 8

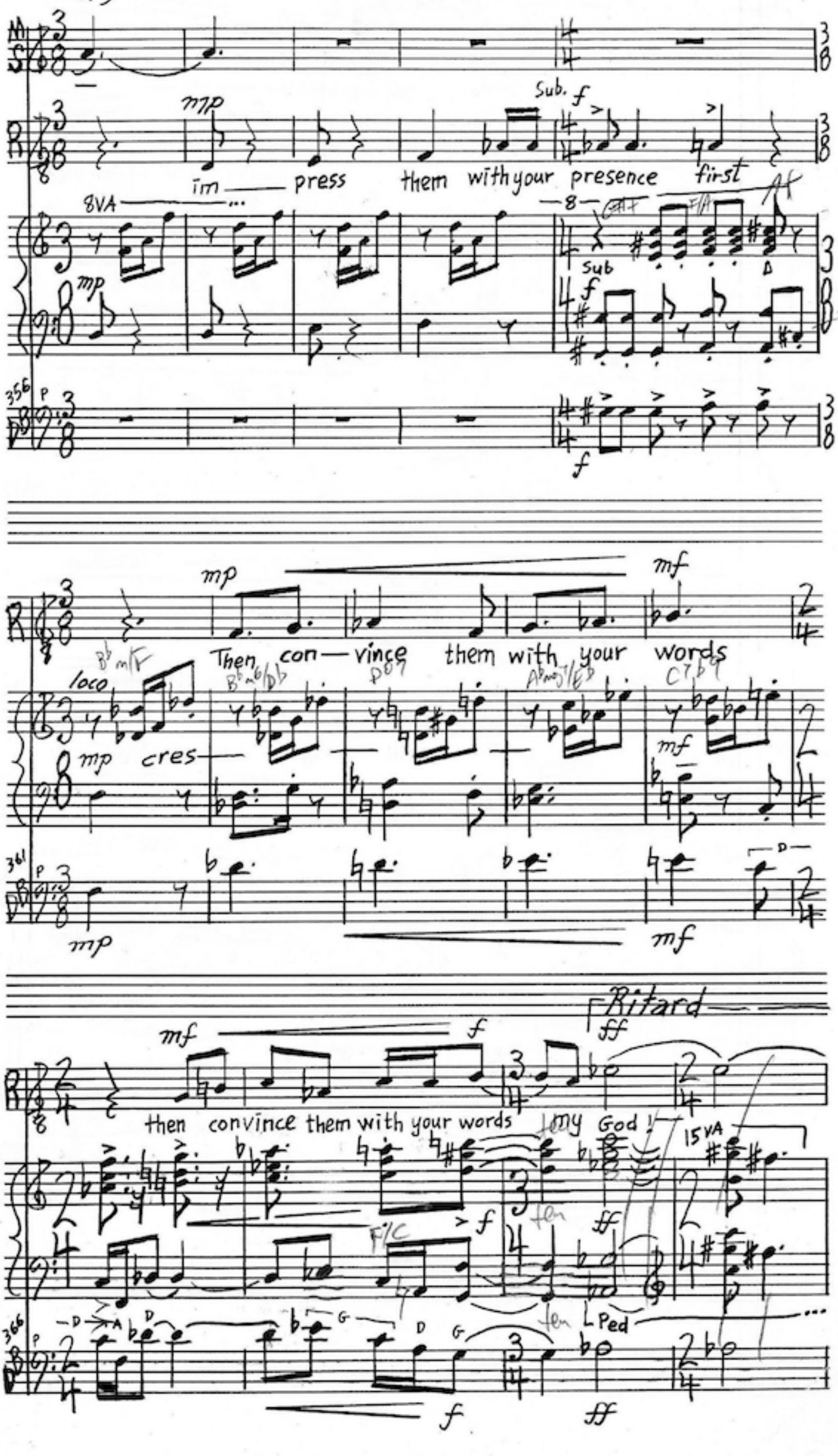

Rit.
mf
f
gliss
see
me
♩=100
(♩.=66)
mf
Ritard
♩=100
saw nothing
(mf)
cresc.
cresc.
308
(mf)
mf
Did you see me on T—V
f
but disa-bil—i—ty
A7 B♭7 A7
311
mf
Did you
mp
mf
I saw nothing but your body
mp
mp
314
mp

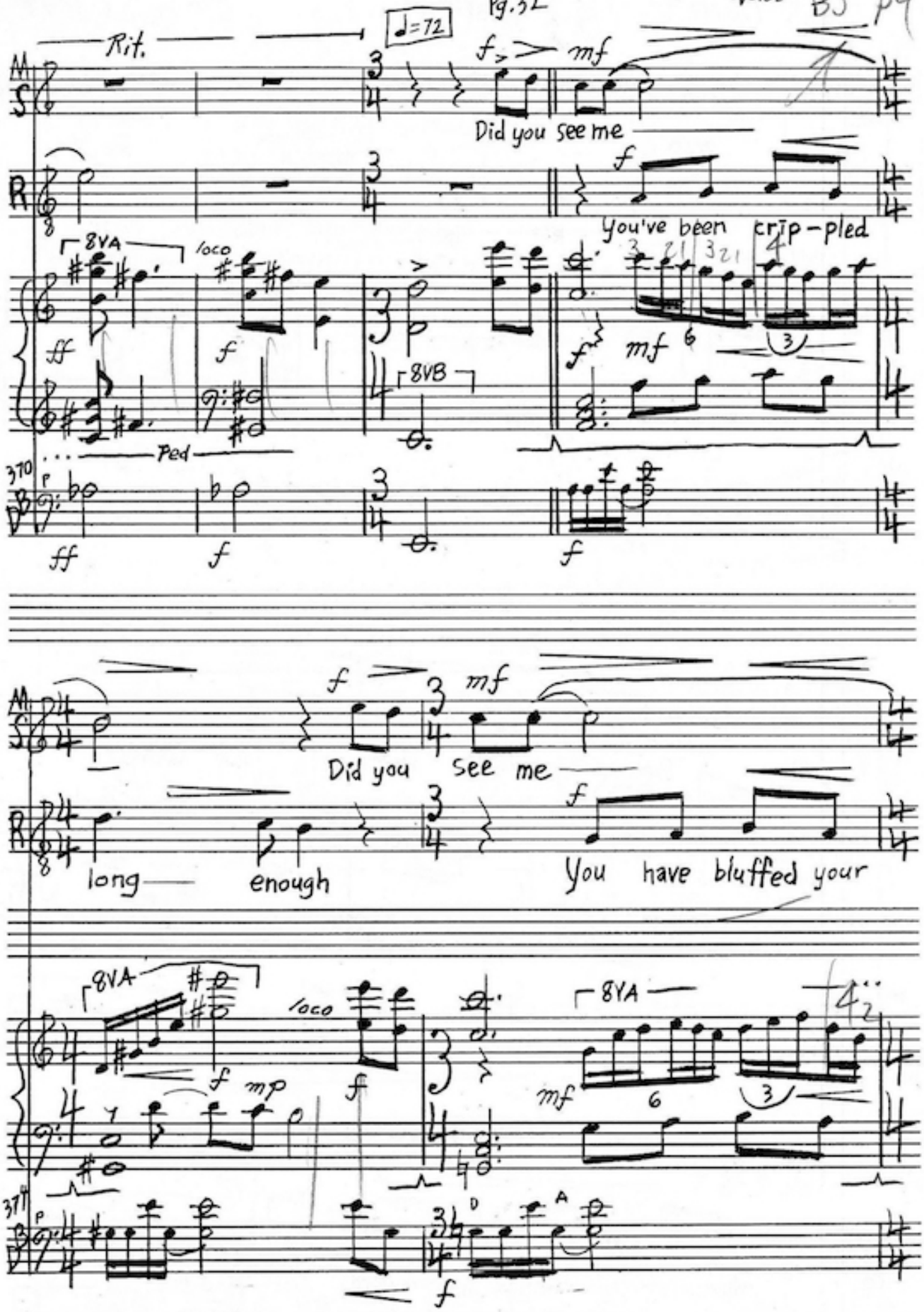

p
mp
Did you see me
mf
being ex-ploited for the sake of
for the sake of
cres
mf
317
mf
f 320
f
mp Ritard
cres
sent,-i-ment laced
with some third rate lib'-ral-is-ŭ-
mf
Ritard
f 320
f
mf
♩=80
dim
mp
m about the handi-capped
mp
♩=80
mf
Ped
322
mp
mf

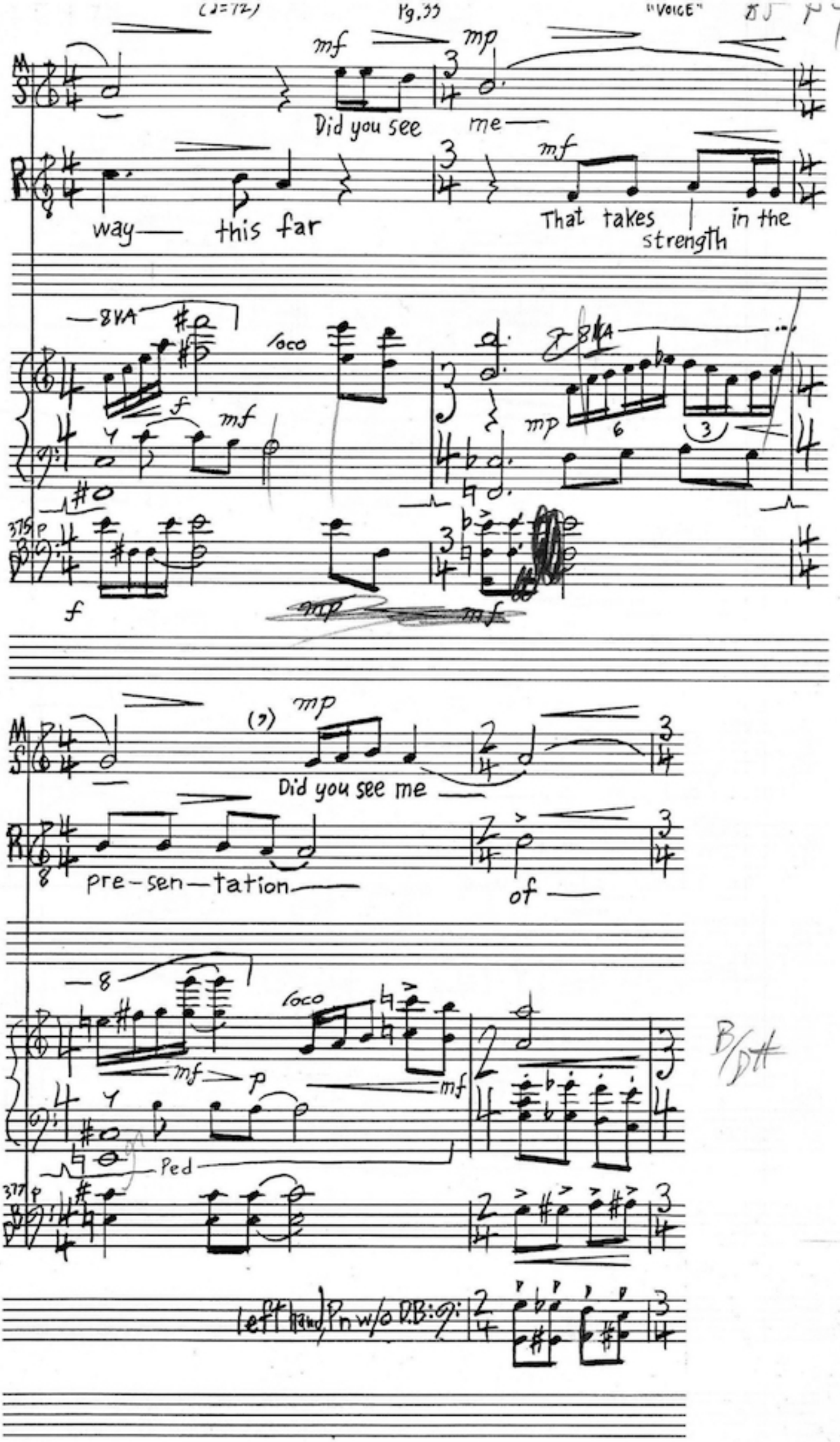

(♩=80)
Pg. 28
"VOICE" BJ
(♩.=53)
Did you see me
Did you see me
I did
not see the strength I
cres
Ped
know is there
I did not see the strength I
know
you are
cres
crippled yes
But you are a
giant
gliss

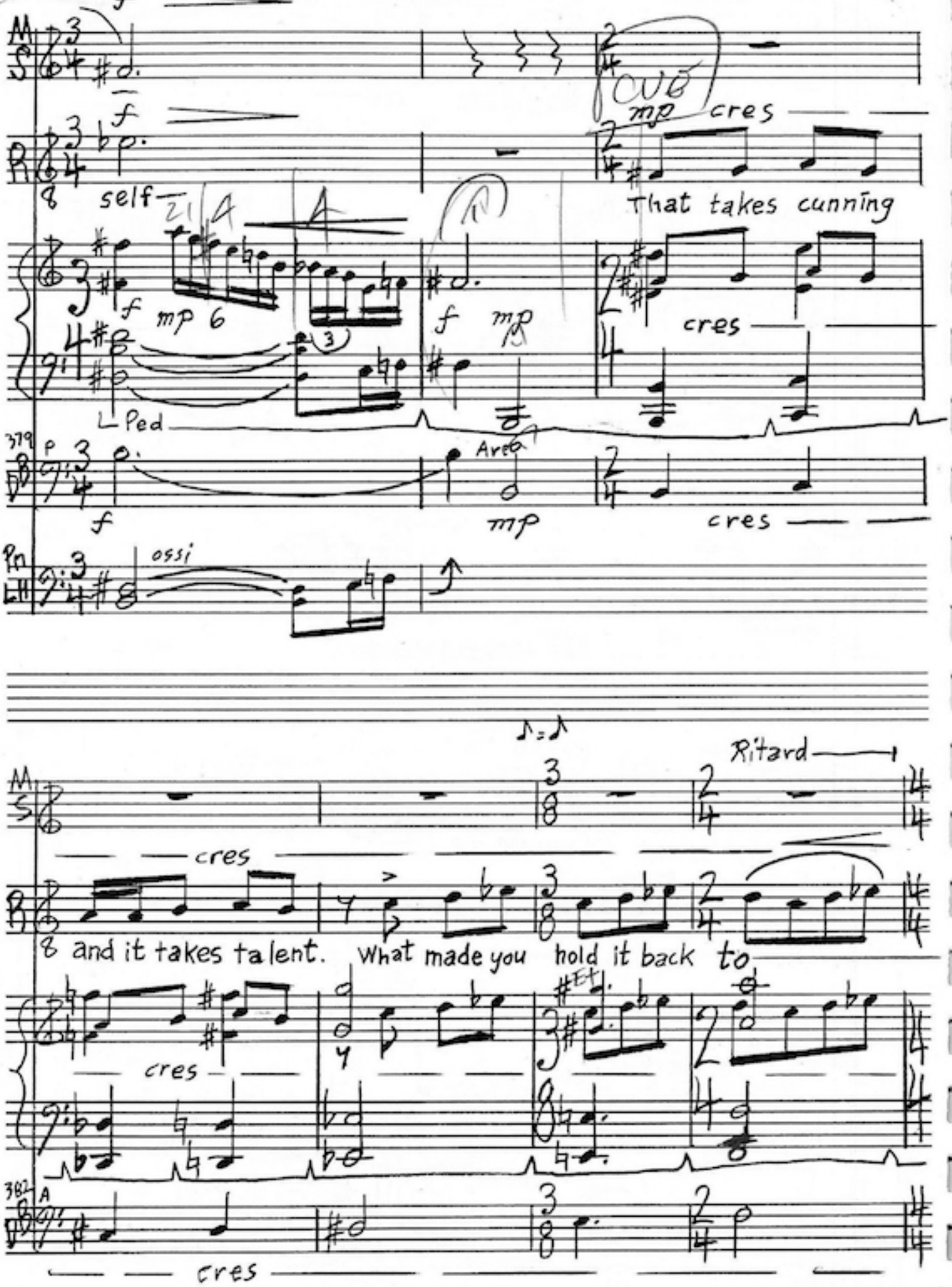

(♩=80)
Accel
♩=100
Pg. 29
"VOICE"
B J p8
you're a crippled giant my god! the
mp Accel
cres
mf
mp
cres
makeup, that dress! how could you let 'em shoot you from that
gliss
cres
cres
But they let me say what I wanted to say
gliss
an — gle
ff
mf
f
ff
mf
f
ff

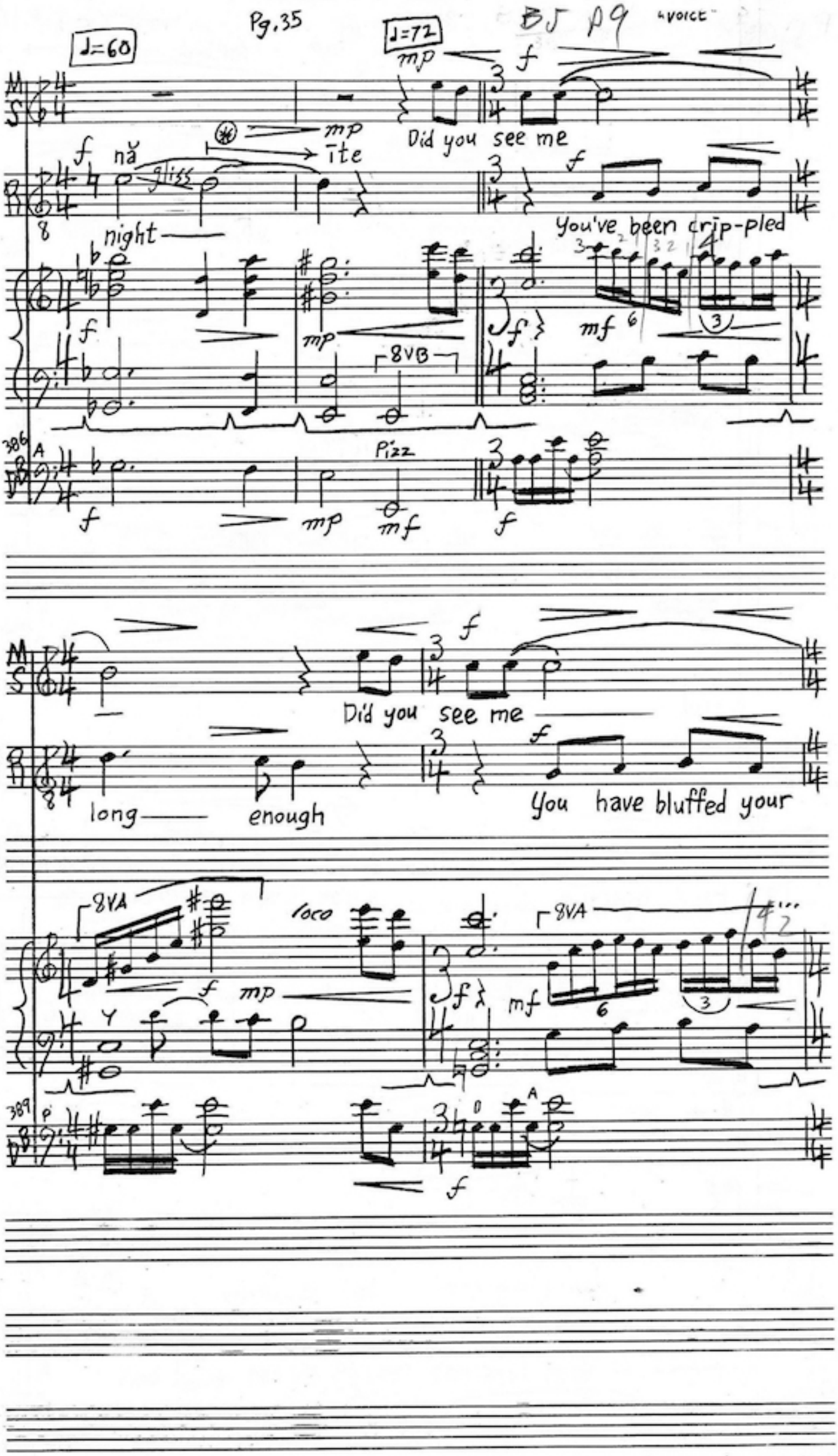

(♩=100)
Pg. 30
"VOICE"
DIM
PED
(♩.=66)
subito
but they let me say
What you say is it relevant
sub.
What I wanted to say
It is icing on the cake.
sub.

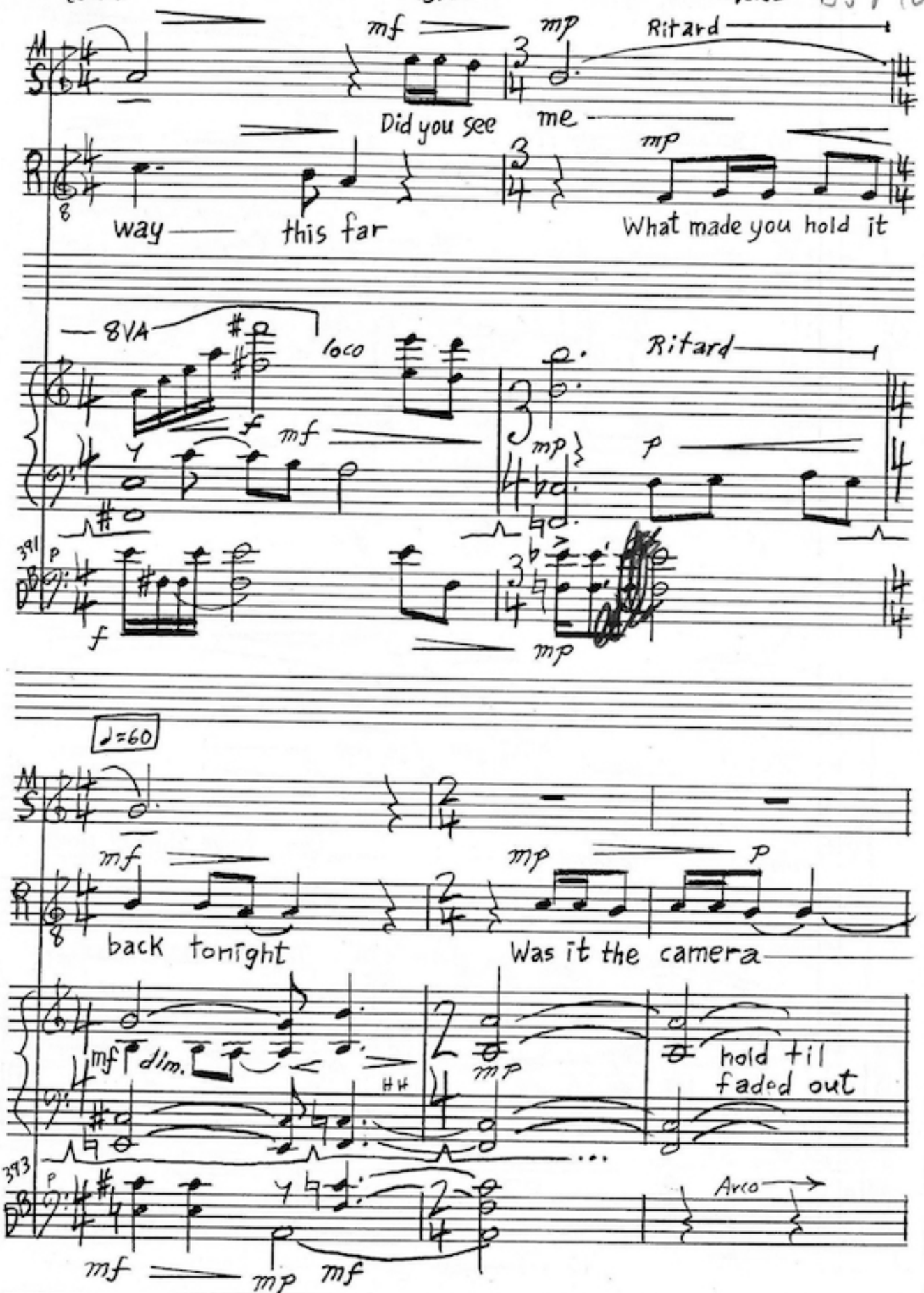

mp
Sub. f
im — press them with your presence first
8VA
8
Sub
f
F
356
mp
mf
Then con — vince them with your words
loco
mp cres
mf
361
mp
mf
Ritard
mf
f
ff
then convince them with your words my God!
15VA
f
ff
Ped
366
f
ff

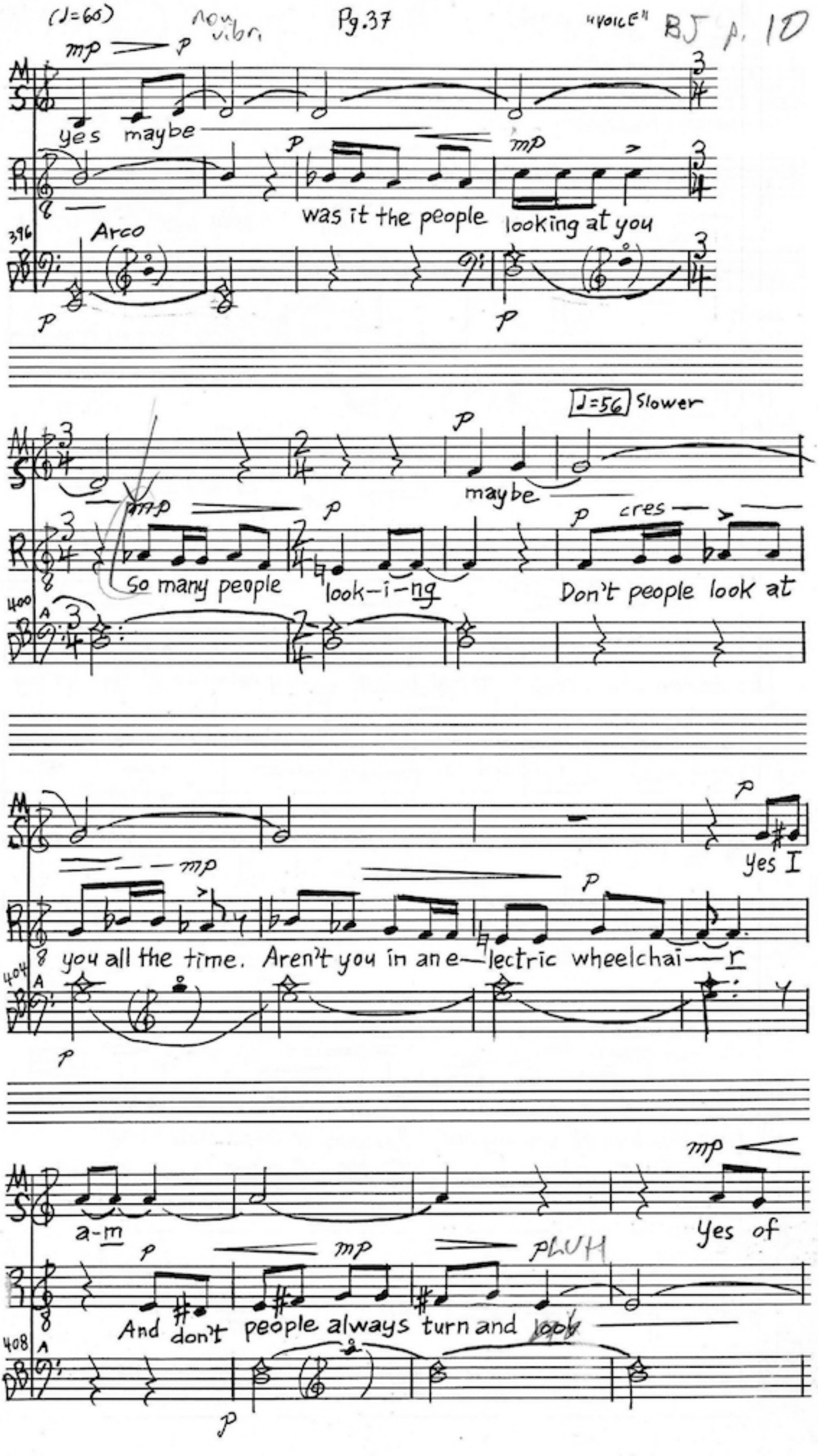

Rit.
♩=72
Did you see me
You've been crip-pled
8VA
loco
8VB
Ped
Did you see me
long enough
You have bluffed your
8VA
loco
8VA

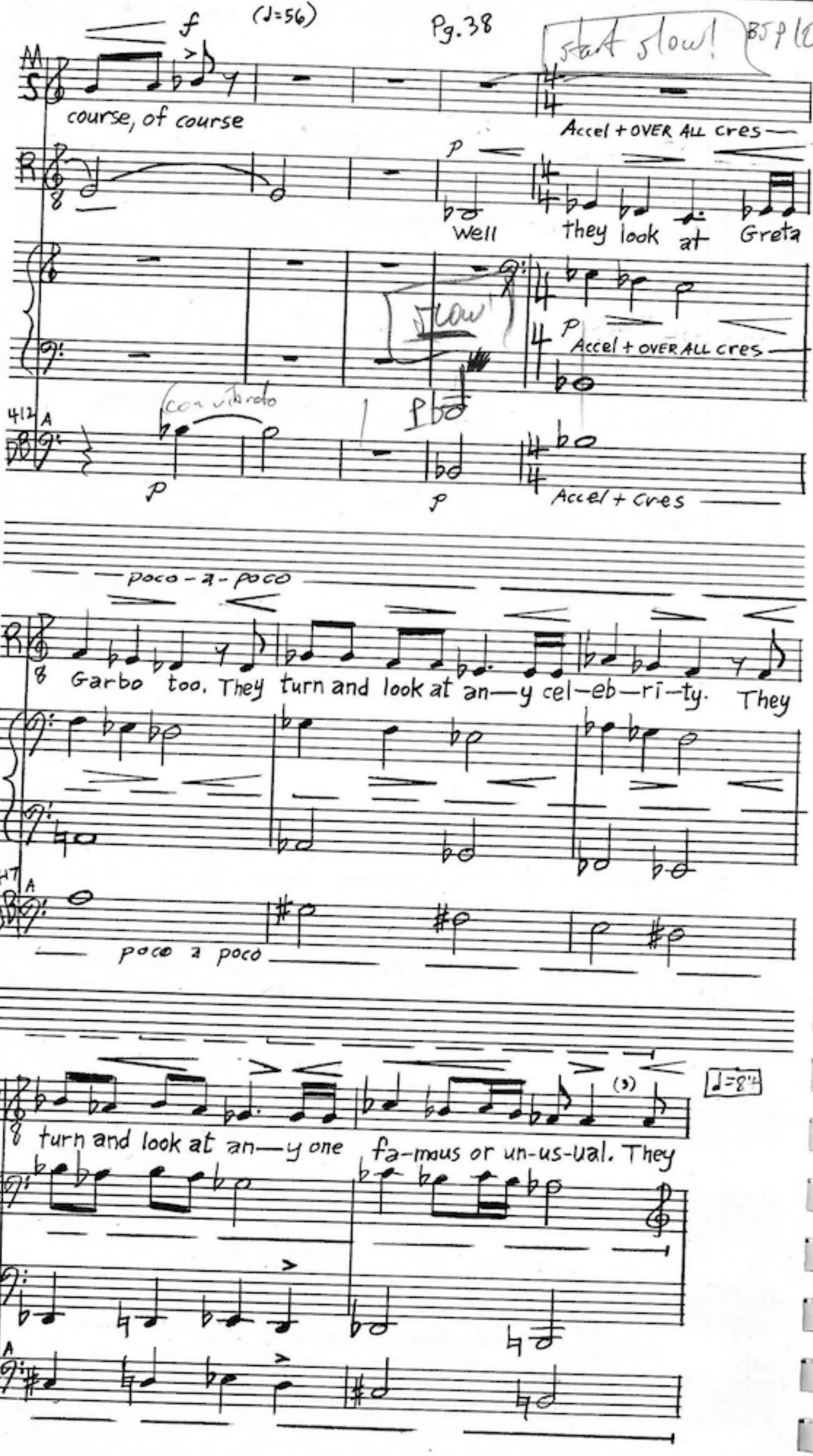

mf
mp
Did you see me
way this far
mf
That takes strength in the
8VA
loco
f
mf
mp
375
f
mp
mf
mp
Did you see me
pre-sen-tation
of
8
loco
mf
p
mf
Ped
377
left hand, Pn w/o D.B:
B/D#


f
mp
cres
self
That takes cunning
f mp 6
f mp
cres
Ped
379
Arco
f
mp
cres
ossi
Ritard
cres
and it takes talent. What made you hold it back to
cres
382
cres


Pg. 35
♩=60
♩=72
BJ p9
"voice"
mp
f
Did you see me
nă
ĭte
gliss
night
You've been crip-pled
8VB
386
Pizz
mf
Did you see me
long
enough
You have bluffed your
8VA
loco
389


mf
mp
Ritard
Did you see me
way
this far
What made you hold it
8VA
loco
Ritard
f
mf
mp
p
391
♩=60
back tonight
Was it the camera
dim.
hold til
faded out
393
Arco


mp p
yes maybe
p mp
was it the people looking at you
396
Arco
p p
♩=56 Slower
p
maybe
mp p p cres
So many people look-i-ng Don't people look at
400
A
p
yes I
mp p
you all the time. Aren't you in an e-lectric wheelchai-r
404
A
p
mp
a-m Yes of
p mp pLUH
And don't people always turn and look
408
A
p


(♩=56)
Pg. 38
start slow! BSP 10
course, of course
Accel + OVER ALL cres
Well they look at Greta
slow
Accel + OVER ALL cres
con vibrato
Accel + cres
poco-a-poco
Garbo too. They turn and look at an—y cel—eb—ri—ty. They
poco a poco
♩=8th
turn and look at an—y one fa-mous or un-us-ual. They

BJ P 10

♩=84

They look be—cause

look at that which catches their attention

Ped

422

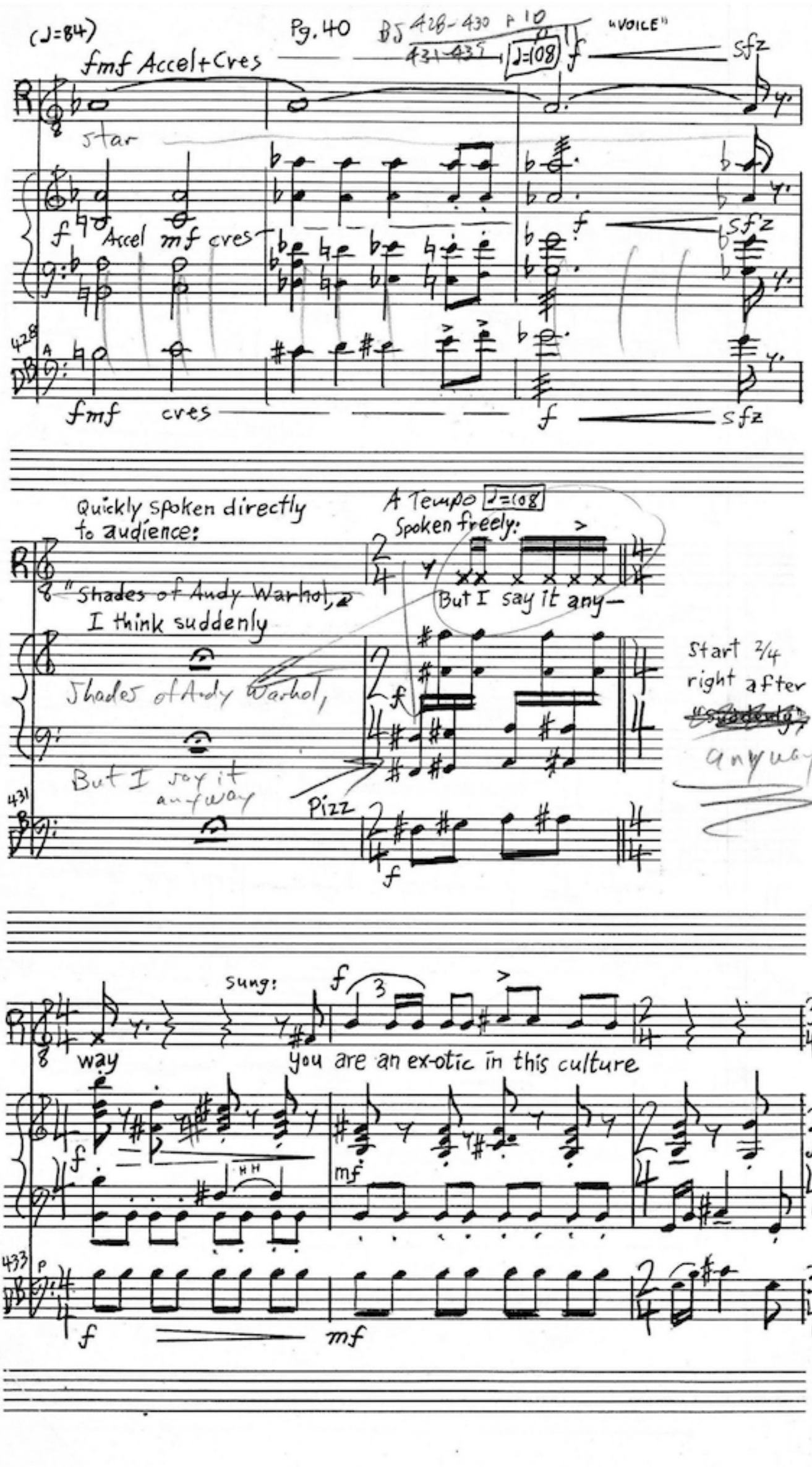
I'm disabl—ed

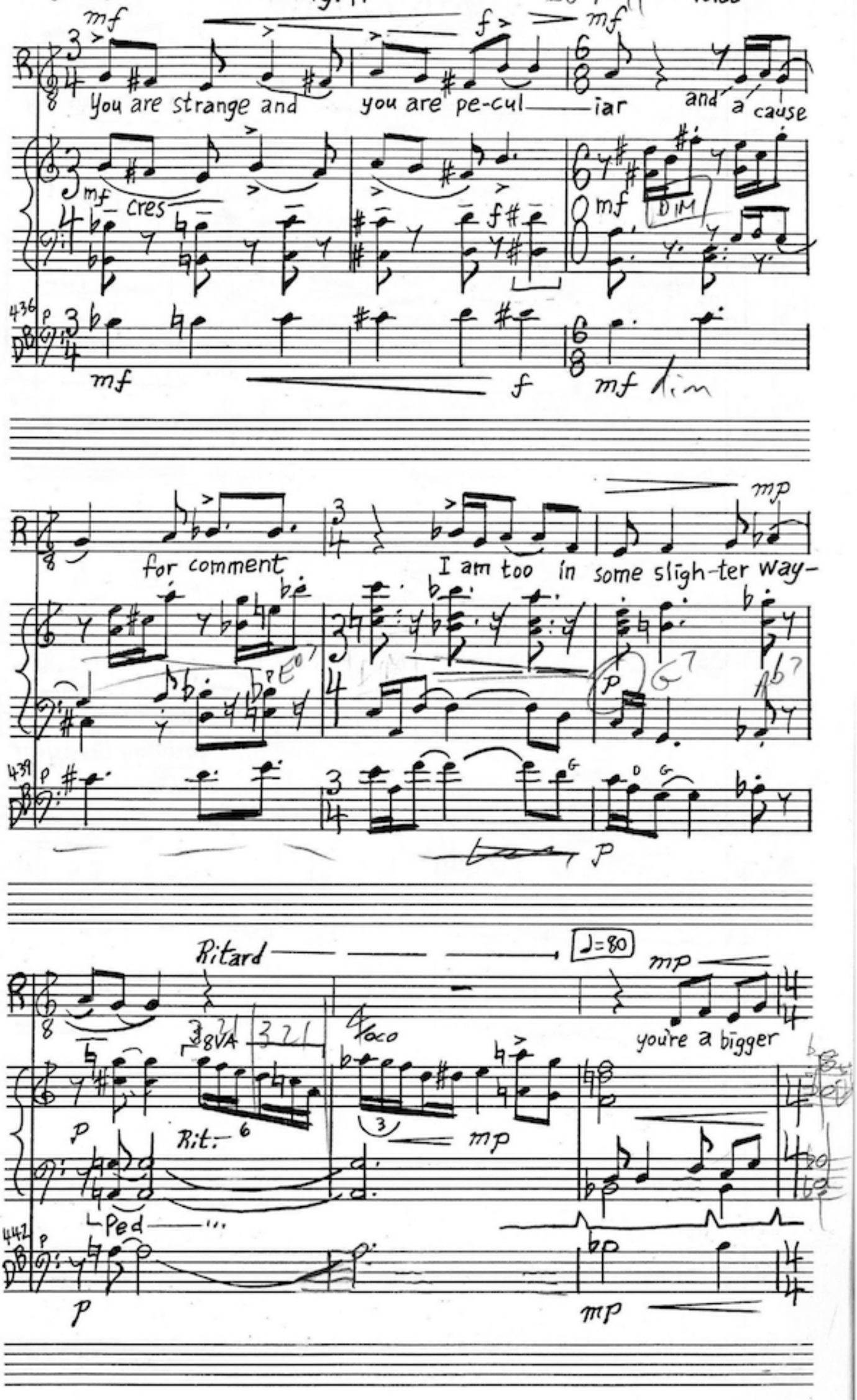
energy

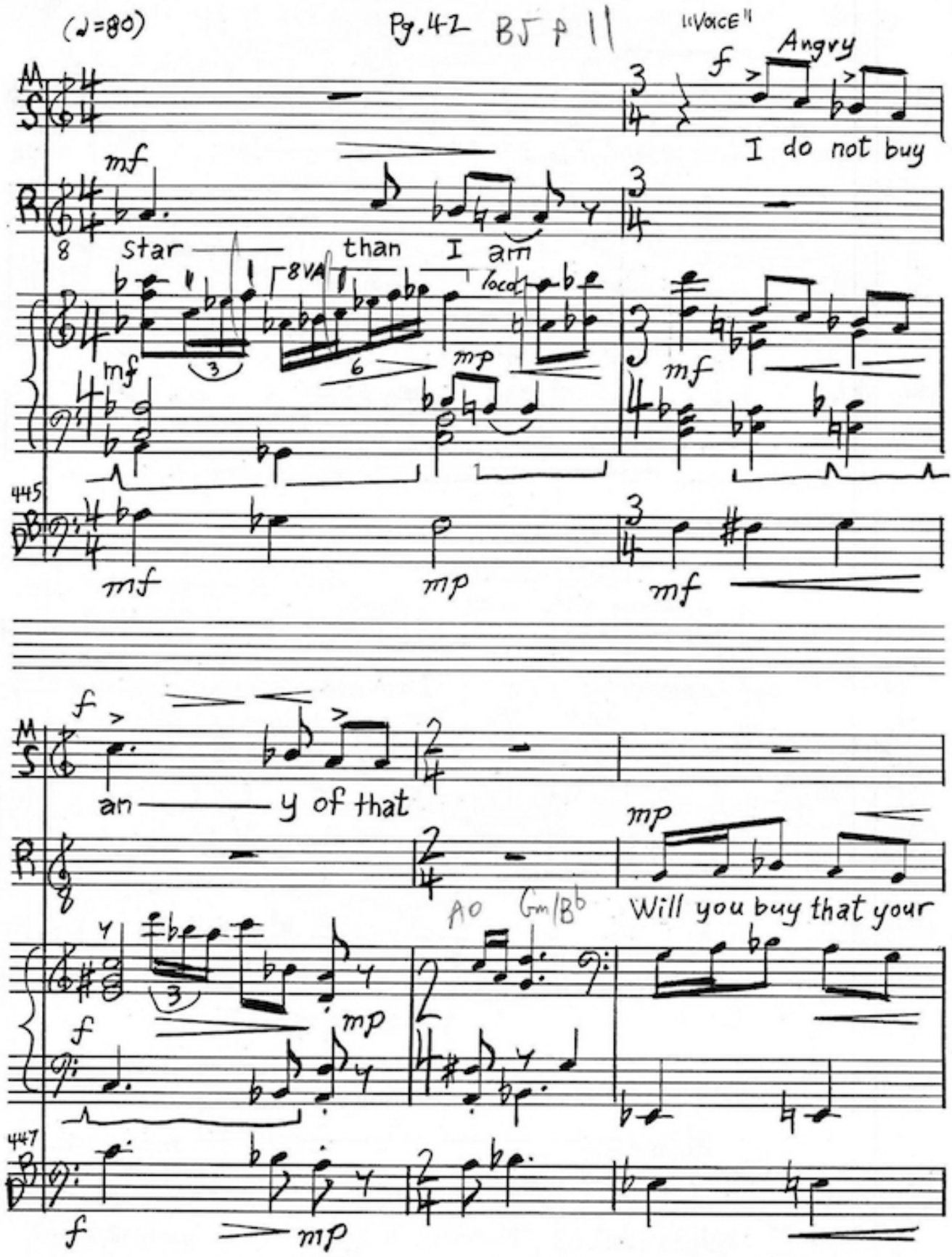
You are crippled but they look because you are a

cres

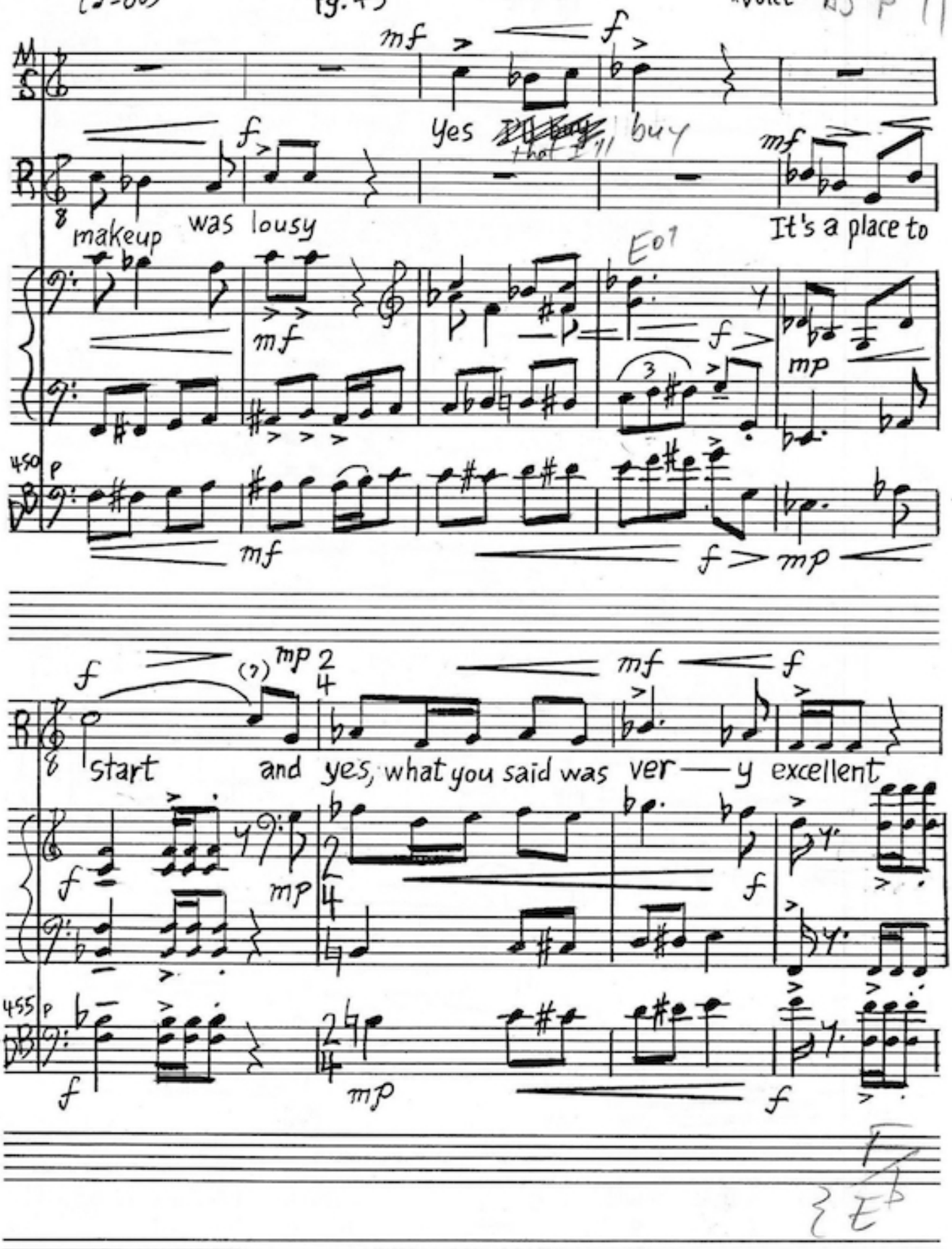
425

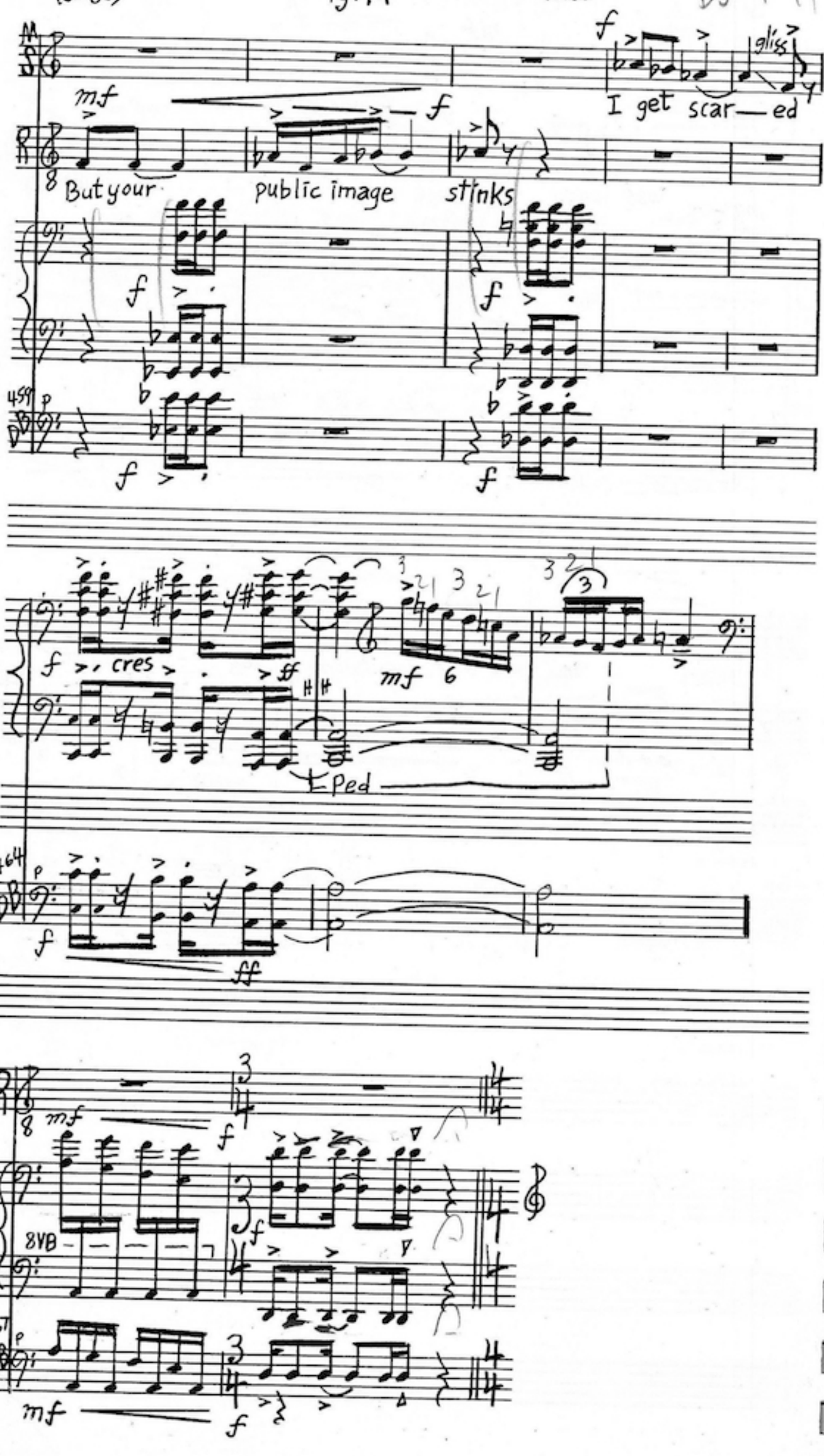

(♩=84)
Pg. 40
BS 428-430 + 10
431-437
♩=108
"VOICE"
fmf Accel+Cres
sfz
star
f
Accel
mf cres
sfz
428
A
fmf
cres
f
sfz
Quickly spoken directly to audience:
A Tempo ♩=108
Spoken freely:
"Shades of Andy Warhol,
I think suddenly
But I say it any-
Shades of Andy Warhol,
But I say it anyway
431
B
Pizz
f
Start 3/4 right after
anyway
sung:
f
way
you are an ex-otic in this culture
mf
433
P
f
mf

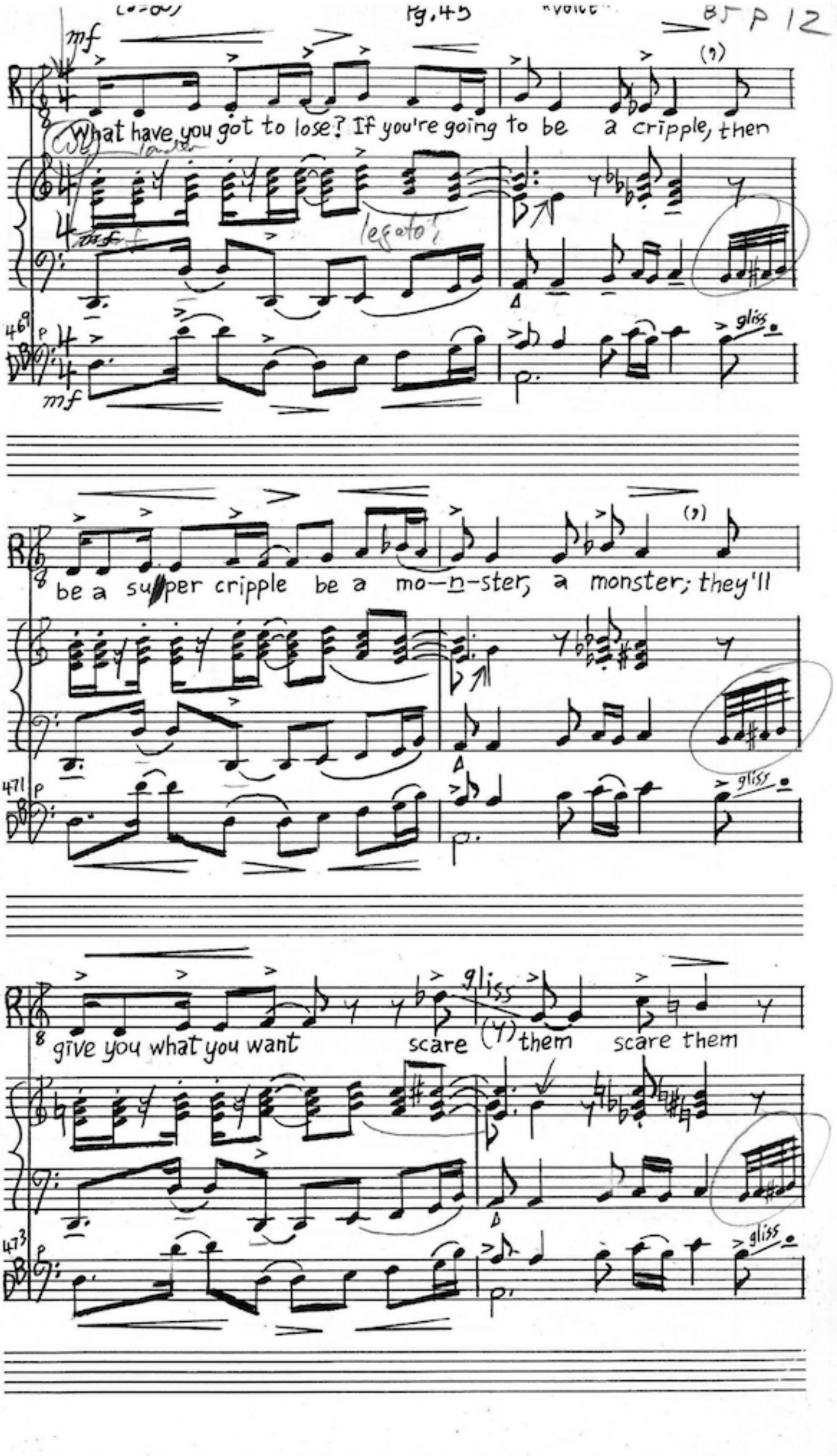

You are strange and you are pe-cul—iar and a cause
cres
DIM
for comment I am too in some sligh-ter way-
Ritard
♩=80
you're a bigger
8VA
Rit.
Ped
dim

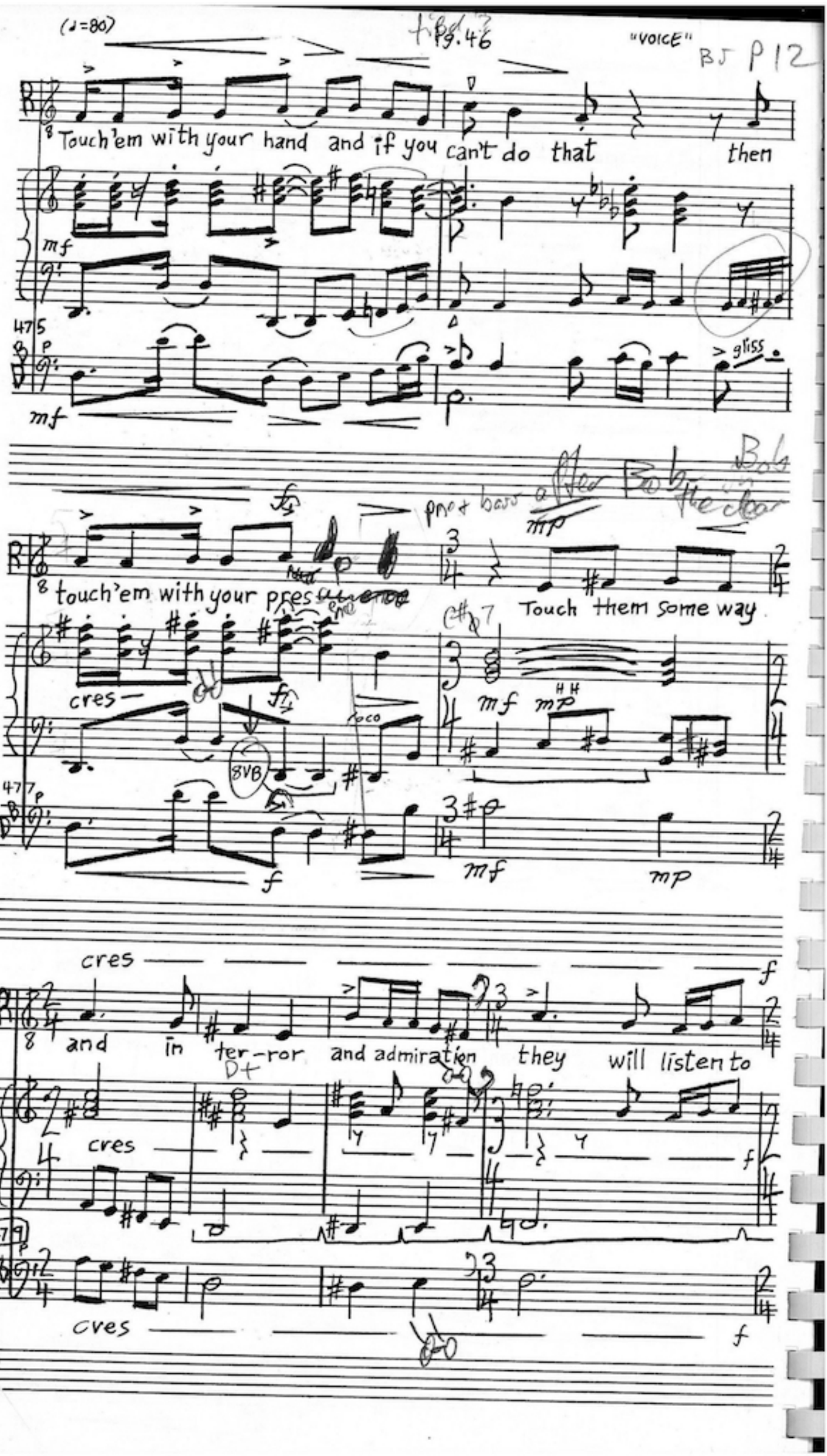

(♩=80)
Pg.42 BJ p 11
"VOICE"
Angry
I do not buy
star than I am
8VA
loco
445
an y of that
Will you buy that your
A0 Gm/B♭
447

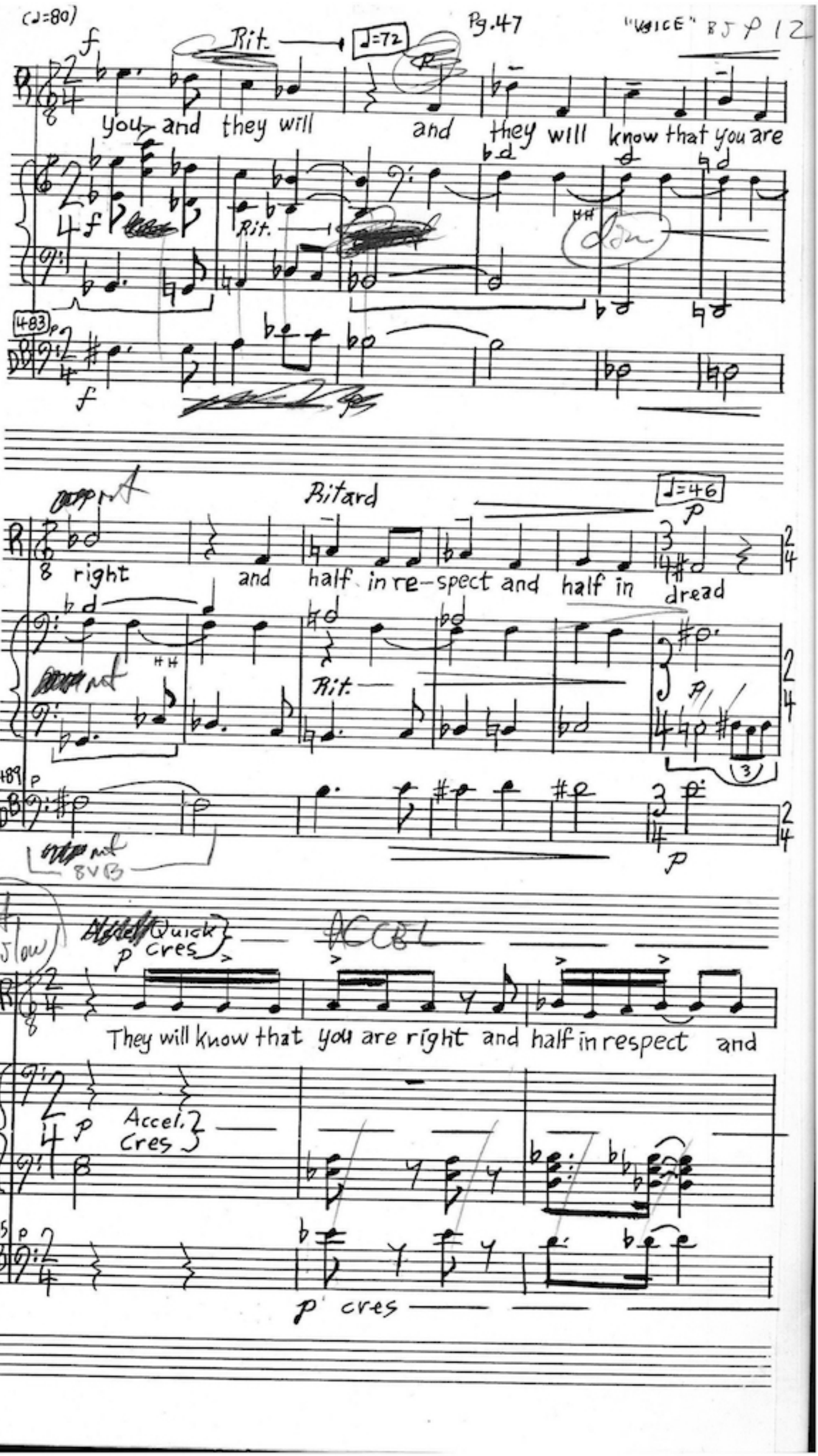
(♩=80) Pg. 43 "VOICE" BJ P 11

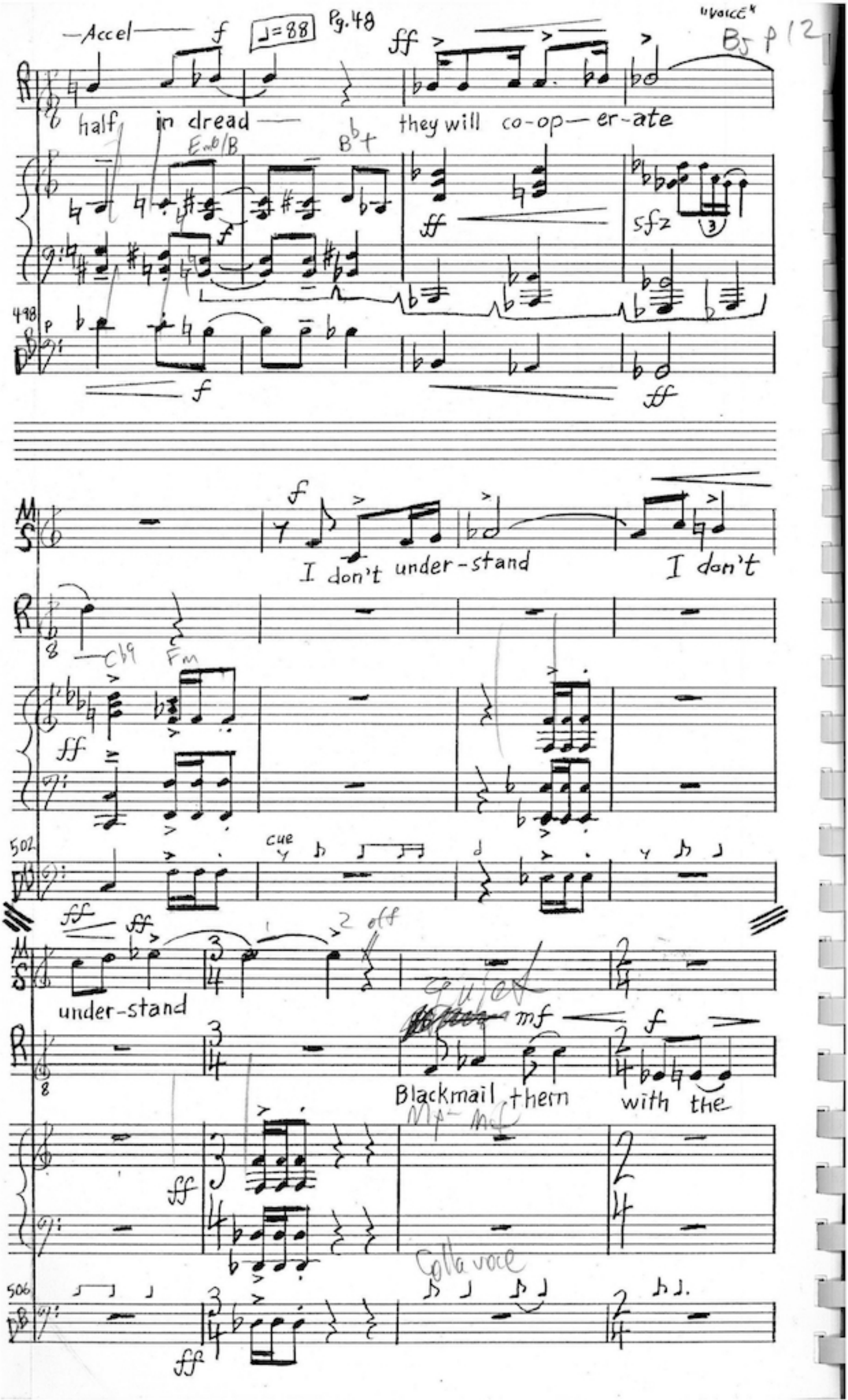



mf
f
gliss
I get scar—ed
But your public image stinks
459
cres
ff
mf
Ped
464
ff
8VB
467
mf
f

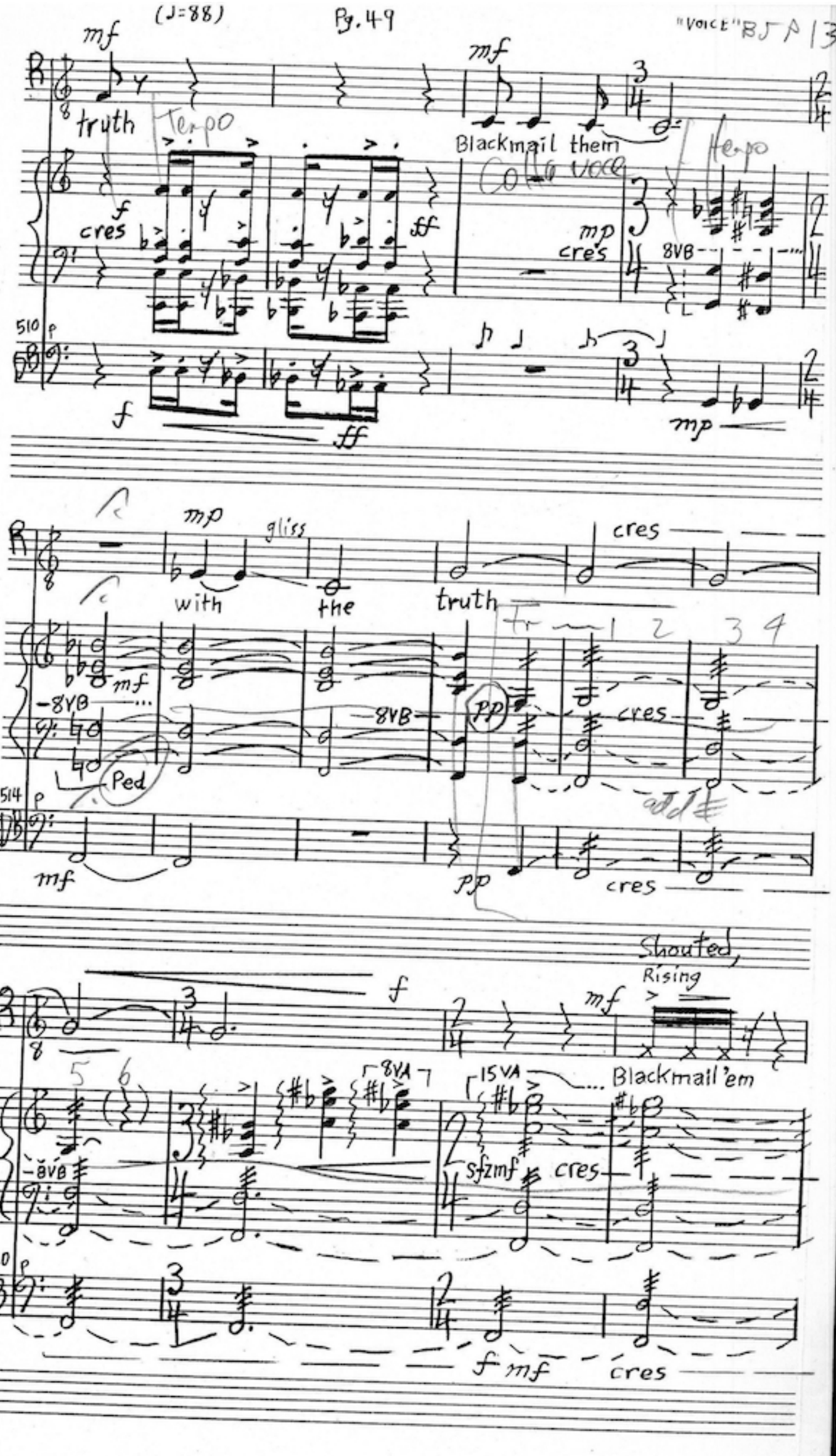

mf
What have you got to lose? If you're going to be a cripple, then
legato
gliss
be a super cripple be a mo—n-ster, a monster; they'll
gliss
give you what you want
scare them
scare them
gliss

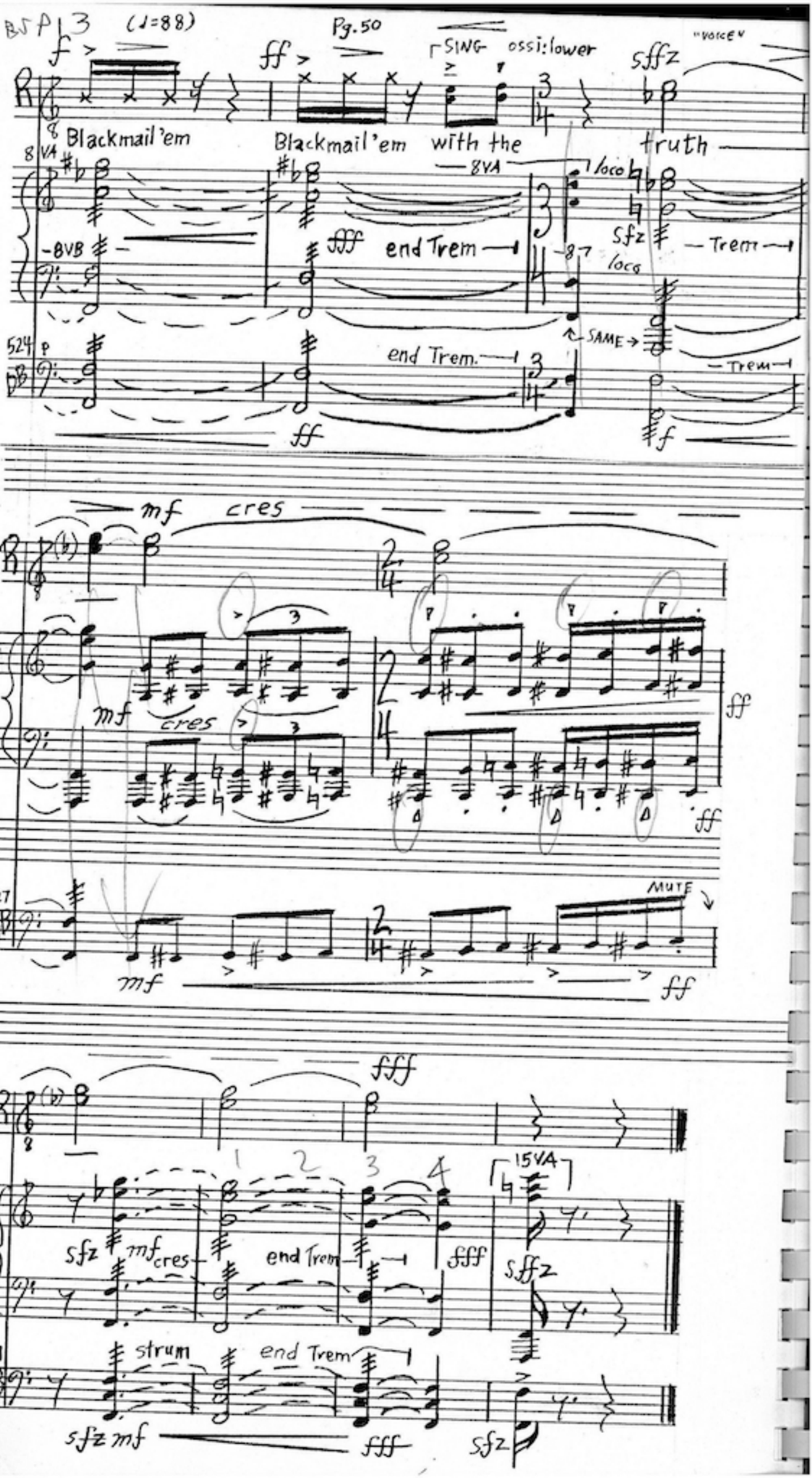

(♩=80)
"VOICE"
BJ P12
Touch'em with your hand and if you can't do that then
mf
475
gliss
touch'em with your pres
Touch them some way
cres
8VB
loco
mf
mp
477
cres
and in ter-ror and admiration they will listen to
cres
479
cres


(♩=80)
Rit.
♩=72
you and they will and they will know that you are
483
Ritard
♩=46
right and half in re-spect and half in dread
489
8VB
Start slow
Quick cres
ACCEL
They will know that you are right and half in respect and
Accel. Cres
495
p cres



Accel
♩=88
Pg. 48
"VOICE"
half in dread — they will co-op—er-ate
B♭+
sfz
498
I don't under-stand I don't under-stand
Fm
502
cue
Blackmail them with the
506
Colla voce


mf
truth
Tempo
f
cres
ff
mf
Blackmail them
Colla voce
mp
cres
Tempo
8VB
510
p
f
ff
mp
mp
gliss
with
the
truth
cres
mf
8VB
8VB
pp
cres
Ped
514
p
mf
pp
cres
Shouted,
Rising
f
mf
Blackmail 'em
5
6
8VA
15VA
8VB
sfzmf
cres
520
p
f
mf
cres


BJP 3 (♩=88)
Pg. 50
SING ossi: lower
"VOICE"
Blackmail'em
Blackmail'em with the
truth
8VA
8VB
end Trem
loco
Trem
SAME
524
end Trem.
mf cres
527
MUTE
fff
15VA
sfz mf cres
end Trem
529
strum
end Trem

"VOICE"

an opera in one act

Ron Whyte, libretto **Lee McClure, music**

Scoring

Baritone, leading role: Ron Whyte
Mezzo-soprano, supporting role: Ms. Ronnie Stier
Piano and Double Bass

Libretto

THE LIBRETTO IS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL. THE TWO CHARACTERS ARE RON WHYTE AND MS. RONNIE STIER WHO ARE BOTH DISABLED. MS. STIER IS MORE SEVERELY DISABLED AND IS CONFINED TO AN ELECTRIC WHEEL-CHAIR, WHILE MR. WHYTE HAS TWO ARTIFICIAL LEGS AND USES CRUTCHES.

TWO BEDROOMS IN SEPARATE APARTMENT BUILDINGS ARE SEPARATED BY A WALL IN MIDDLE OF STAGE (WALL MADE OF SCRIM SO SINGERS CAN SEE AND HEAR EACH OTHER). AT EDGE OF STAGE, OUTSIDE OF RON'S APARTMENT BUILDING, IS A PAY-PHONE UNDER A STREET LIGHT.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

AT RISE RON AND MS. STIER ARE SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER VIA TELEPHONE FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE BEDROOMS.

(SCORE PG. #'S; LOCATION OF TEXT IN SCORE:)

MS. STEIR
What are we doing? What do you think we are doing? 1

RON
Its unimportant. After we do it, we'll know what we've done. 2

MS. STIER
But I'm not, you know... You know I am.

RON
Yes, I know yes. All of us are dying. Do you want applause? 3

MS. STIER
No.

RON
Do you want tears?

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MS. STIER
No!

RON
Do you want to work together?

MS. STIER
Do you?

RON
Yes. Do you?

MS. STIER
Yes. I said so. Yes. I meant it when I said yes. Will it work? 4

RON
Does it matter?

MS. STIER
Maybe it won't happen.

RON
If it doesn't, then that's too bad. We might have fun trying to find out, what we're doing. 5

MS.STIER
But I'm not, you know. You know I am. 6

RON
Yes, I know, yes. All of us are dying. Do you want applause? 7

MS. STIER
No!

RON
Do you want tears?

MS. STIER
No!

RON
Do you want to work together?

MS. STIER
Do you?

RON
Yes I said so, yes I meant it, when I said yes.

MS. STIER
Will it work?

RON
Does it matter?

MS.STIER
Maybe it won't happen!

RON
If it doesn't, then that's too bad.

MS. STIER
Will it work?

RON
We might have fun trying to find out...

MS. STIER
Trying to find out.

RON
We might have fun trying to find out.

MS.STIER
Will it work? Maybe it won't happen?

RON
If it doesn't, then that's too bad. We might have fun trying to find out; trying to find out what we are doing; what we are doing.

(PAUSE. RON AND MS.STIER HANG UP PHONES.)

RON (MONOLOGUE:)
Sometimes a voice comes from the past, or from behind you in the same room, and you turn and they are there. But with her it was different. She was a voice on the telephone. She was a voice on the telephone. That is where her suppleness and youth and grace and strength and the beauty that could be used existed.

Our meetings together are seldom, once a year at most, and always uncomfortable. We meet because the world commands that the physical presentation of person to person is somehow essential to communication.

But this is not true.

It is a lie.

We meet on the phone, and interact. That is where "We" exist. There, and nowhere else.

(GRAND PAUSE.)

RON
Sometimes I say to myself, "What is this relationship? This one or two or sometimes three hours a day on the phone. What is this, this yelling, this soothing? This mutual shaking awake. Is it some form of love?" I answer myself:

"It is a necessity. Let Definition begin and end there.
It is a necessity. Let Definition begin and end there.
Let Definition begin and end there." 19

(PAUSE.)

RON
The first time I see her, see her physically, is on a
Channel 13 television program. The first time I see her, 20
see her physically, she is badly made up and photographed;
badly. I am enraged; I am enraged. I rush from the house and
walk thirty blocks. 21

(PAUSE; RON PUTS ON HIS ARTIFICIAL LEGS, HIS COAT AND
BACK-PACK. HE PICKS UP HIS CRUTCHES AND LEAVES 22
APT. EXITING BACK STAGE. HE RE-ENTERS STAGE NEAR
PAY-PHONE.)

RON
It is night, and finally I go to a telephone booth and call 23
her.

(RON DIALS. PHONE RINGING IS NOT HEARD; BUT AUD-
IENCE SEES MS.STIER PICK UP PHONE; "HELLOS" ARE
GESTICULATED BUT NOT HEARD.)

MS. STIER
Did you see me? Did you see me on TV? 24

RON
I saw your lousy makeup.

MS. STIER
Did you see me on TV?

RON
I saw the way you let them film you by that mirror to get the
reflection of the wheelchair. 25

MS. STIER
Did you see, did you see me on TV?

RON
I saw the dew on your upper lip look like a moustache.

MS. STIER
Did you see me?

RON
I saw nothing but disability. 26

MS. STIER
Did you see me on TV?

RON
I saw nothing but your body...

MS. STIER
Did you...

RON
...being exploited for the sake of... 27

MS. STIER
...did you see me?

RON
...for the sake of sentiment laced with some third rate liberal-
ism about the handicapped.

MS. STIER
Did you see me? Did you see me? 28

RON
I did not see the strength I know is there; I did not see the
strength I know. You are crippled, yes. But you are a giant.
You're a crippled giant. My God, the makeup; that dress! 29
How could you let them shoot you from that angle?

MS. STIER
But they let me say what I wanted to say!

(PAUSE.) 30

RON
What you say is irrelevant.

MS. STIER
But they let me say...

RON
It is icing on the cake.

MS. STIER
...what I wanted to say.

RON
Impress them with your presence first. Then convince them 31
them with your words; then convince them with your words,
my God!

MS. STIER
Did you see me? 32

RON
You've been crippled long enough.

MS. STIER
Did you see me?

RON
You have bluffed your way this far.

MS. STIER
Did you see me? 33

RON
That takes strength in the presentation...

MS. STIER
Did you see me?

RON
...of self! That takes cunning and it takes talent. What 34
made you hold it back tonight?

MS. STIER
Did you see me? 35

RON
You've been crippled long enough.

MS. STIER
Did you see me?

RON
You have bluffed your way this far.

MS. STIER
Did you see me? 36

RON
What made you hold it back tonight? Was it the camera?

MS. STIER
Yes, maybe. 37

RON
Was it the people looking at you; so many people looking?

MS. STIER
Maybe.

RON
Don't people look at you all the time? Aren't you in an
electric wheelchair?

MS. STIER
Yes I am.

RON
And don't people always turn and look?

MS. STIER
Yes of course, of course!

RON
Well, they look at Greta Garbo too. They turn and look at 38
any celebrity. They turn and look at anyone famous or
unusual. They look at that which catches their attention. 39

MS. STIER
They look because I'm dissabled!

RON
You are crippled, but they look because you are a star!

(SPOKEN DIRECTLY TO AUDIENCE:) 40

I think suddenly: Shades of Andy Warhol. But I say it anyway.

(BACK TO SINGING TO MS.STIER VIA PHONE:)

You are an exotic in this culture. You are strange and 41
you are peculiar and a cause for comment. I am too in some
slighter way. You're a bigger star than I am. 42

MS. STIER
I do not buy any of that!

RON
Will you buy that your makeup was lousy?

MS. STIER
Yes, that I'll buy. 43

RON
It's a place to start. And yes, what you said was very
excellent. But your public image stinks! 44

MS. STIER
I get scared!

RON
What have you got to lose? If you're going to be a cripple, 45
then be a super cripple, be a monster, a monster. They'll
give you what you want, scare them, scare them! Touch them 46
with your hand, and if you can't do that, then touch'em with
your presence. Touch them someway, and in terror and
admiration they will listen to you, and they will, and
they will know that you are right; and half in respect and 47
half in dread, they will know that you are right and half
in respect and half in dread they will cooperate. 48

MS. STIER
I don't understand, I don't understand!

RON
Blackmail them with the truth. Blackmail them with the truth. 49

(SHOUTING; GETTING LOUDER:)

Blackmail'em. Blackmail'em! Blackmail'em! 50

(SINGING:)

...with the truth!